PIOUS THOUGHTS

Concerning the

KNOWLEDGE

AND

LOVE of GOD,

And other HOLY EXERCISES:

By the late Archbishop of *CAMBRAI*.

Together with a

LETTER

OF

Christian Instruction

By a LADY.

Done out of French.

Except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Matt. xviii. 3.

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Printed for *W.* and *J. Innys* at the *Prince's Arms*, the West-End of St. *Paul's*. 1720.

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Advertiſement.

THE *following Diſcourſes are faithfully extracted from* the ſpiritual Works *of the late* Archbiſhop of Cambray, *publiſhed ſince his Deceaſe. If the pure and ſpiritual Religion, equally remote from the two Extremes of Superſtition and Enthuſiaſm, which is therein ſet forth and recommended, is not ſufficient to make them acceptable to the Reader, the Tranſlator could not hope to do it by any prefatory Encomium. He therefore contents himſelf with promiſing, that if this ſmall Taſte of our Author's Divine Thoughts ſhall be found*

found agreeable, and be well accepted, he will soon oblige the Publick with a large Addition of more of 'em.

The Christian Instruction, *which is here added, was written by an eminently pious Lady, an intimate Friend of the Archbishop's, and of the same Spirit with him.*

'Tis so very just and solid, so easy and useful, that it wants no Words to illustrate or recommend it.

May our Divine Master bless it to all who have Ears to hear, and Hearts to receive it!

PIOUS

PIOUS THOUGHTS

Concerning the

Knowledge and Love of GOD.

That GOD *is little known at present.*

THAT, which is the most wanting to Men, is the Knowledge of God. When they have read a great deal, they know a certain train of Miracles and Marks of Providence, by the Facts recorded in History; they have made serious Reflections on the Frailty and Corruption of the World; they are even convinc'd of certain Maxims, which are useful for the Reformation of their Manners with regard to future Happiness: But all this

Fabrick wants a Foundation; this Body of Holineſs and Chriſtianity is without a Soul. That which ſhould animate the true Believer is the Idea of God, who is all, who does all, and to whom all is due. He is infinite throughout, in Wiſdom, in Power, in Love. We muſt not wonder then if every thing he does carries the mark of Infinity, and ſurpaſſes the Reaſon of Man. When he prepares and diſpoſes any thing, his Counſels and Ways are, as the Scriptures ſpeak *, as far above our Counſels and Ways as the Heavens are above the Earth; his Power does not ſhow itſelf by any Labour in the execution of what he has reſolv'd, there being no effect how great ſoever more difficult to him than the moſt common. It coſt him no more pains to draw the Heaven and the Earth, as we now ſee them, out of nothing, than to make a River run its natural Courſe, or to let a Stone fall downwards. His whole Power is in his Will. He needs but to will, and the things are immediately accompliſh'd. Tho' the Scripture repreſents him ſpeaking in the Creation, it is not that it was neceſſary for him to found forth a Word, which might publiſh his Will to the whole World, he would produce. That *Speaking* which

* *Iſa.* lv. *v.* 9.

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the Scripture repreſents to us, is all ſimple and internal; it is the Thought he had conceiv'd to make Things, the Reſolution he had form'd within himſelf. This Thought became fruitful, and without being uttered by him, drew from him, as from the Fountain of all Beings, all thoſe, which compoſe the Univerſe. Juſt ſo is his Mercy no other than his pure Will; he lov'd us before the Creation of the World; he ſaw us, he knew us, he prepar'd his good Things for us, he lov'd us and choſe us from Eternity. What new Good ſoever befalls us, flows ſtill from that ancient Source; God never has a new Will concerning us; he never changes; 'tis we who change. When we are juſt and good, then are we conformable and pleaſing to him; when we forſake Righteouſneſs and ceaſe to be good, then we ceaſe alſo to be conformable to him, and to pleaſe him. His Will is an immutable Rule, which the unſtable Creature approaches to and wanders from ſucceſſively. His Juſtice againſt the Wicked, and his Love for the Righteous, are but one and the ſame thing: 'tis the ſame Goodneſs which unites with all that's good, and is incompatible with all that's evil. As for Mercy, it is the Goodneſs of God, who finding us evil,

would make us good. This Mercy, which we experience in time, is in its original an eternal Love of God for his Creature. He alone gives the true Goodneſs. Woe to the preſumptuous Soul that hopes to find it in itſelf! It is the Love which God has for us which gives us all. But the greateſt of all the Gifts that he can make us, is that Love which we ought to have for him. When God loves us ſo much as to make us love him, he then reigns in us, he there forms our Life, our Peace, our Happineſs, and we already begin to live by his bleſſed Life. That Love which he has for us bears the Stamp of his Infinity; he loves not as we do, with a bounded and ſcanty Love: when he loves, all the motions of his Love are infinite. He comes down from Heaven to Earth to ſeek the Creature of Clay, whom he loves; he becomes Man and Clay with it; he gives it his Fleſh to eat. 'Tis by ſuch Prodigies of Love that the infinite Being tranſcends all the Affections whereof Men are capable. He loves like God; and this Love has nothing in it but what is incomprehenſible. 'Tis the height of Folly to attempt by finite Wiſdom to meaſure infinite Love. God, far from loſing any thing of his Grandeur by thoſe Exceſſes of Love,

does in them ſhow the Marks of his Greatneſs, diſcovering therein the Sallies and tranſports of an infinite Love. O how great and amiable is he in his Myſteries! but we have not Eyes to ſee them, nor Hearts diſpos'd to diſcover God in all.

Of the Neceſſity of Knowing and Loving GOD.

WE muſt not wonder that Men do ſo little for God, and that the little they do coſts them ſo dear; they know him not; ſcarce believe they that he is. The Belief they have of him is rather a blind deference to the Authority of a publick Opinion, than a lively and diſtinct Conviction of the Divinity: They ſuppoſe it, becauſe they dare not examine it, and becauſe, being drawn away by their Paſſions towards other Objects, they are indifferent upon the Matter; but they have no Notion of God, but as an unknown ſomething, that's marvellous, obſcure, and at a great diſtance from us; they look upon him as a powerful and ſevere Being, who makes great De-

mands upon us, who thwarts our Inclinations, who threatens us with mighty Evils, and againſt whoſe terrible Judgment it is neceſſary to take ſome Precautions. Theſe are the Thoughts of thoſe who reflect ſeriouſly on Religion, who are yet but a very ſmall number. Such a one, ſay they, fears God, and in effect he does but fear him without loving him; as Children fear the Maſter who corrects them; as a bad Servant fears the Blows of him whom he ſerves out of Fear, without having any regard to his Intereſt. Would we be treated by a Son, or even by a Servant, as we treat God? It is becauſe we know him not; for if we knew him, we ſhould love him. God is Love, ſaith St. *John* †, he that loves him not, knows him not: For how wou'd it be poſſible to know Love himſelf, without loving him? We muſt therefore conclude, that all thoſe who do but fear, know not God.

But who is it, O my God, that ſhall know thee? He that ſhall know nothing but thee, that ſhall know himſelf no more, and to whom all things beſides thee ſhall be as if they were not. The World wou'd be amaz'd to hear a Language like this, becauſe the World is full of itſelf, of Vanity, of

† *Chap.* iv. *v.* 8. and 16.

Falſhood,

Falſhood, and void of God: But I hope there will ever be ſome Souls who will hunger after God, and who will reliſh the Truths that I am now going to declare.

O my God, before thou madeſt the Heaven and the Earth, there was nothing beſides thee. Thou waſt; for thou never beganſt to be; but thou waſt alone. Except thee there was yet nothing: thou enjoyedſt thy ſelf in that happy Solitude; thou waſt ſufficient to thy ſelf, and hadſt no need to find any thing out of thee, ſince 'tis thou, who far from receiving from any, giveſt to every thing, which is not thy ſelf, by thy Almighty Word, that is, by thy ſimple Will, to which nothing is difficult, and which does whatſoever it pleaſes, without ſucceſſion of Time, or any the leaſt Labour. Thou madeſt this World, which was not, to begin to be. Thou didſt not do like the Workmen here below, who find the Materials ready to their Hands, who do but join them together, and whoſe Art conſiſts in putting into order, by little and little, and with a great deal of Pains, thoſe Materials which they have not made. Thou foundeſt nothing ready made: thou thy ſelf madeſt all the Materials of thy Work. It was upon *Nothing* that thou didſt work.

Thou ſaidſt, Let the World be; and the World was. Thou hadſt need but to ſpeak, and all was made.

But for what didſt thou make all theſe Things? They were all made for Man, and Man was made for thee. This is thy eſtabliſh'd Order: Woe to the Soul that inverts it, that deſires to appropriate all to itſelf, and that ſhuts itſelf up in its own Being! this is to violate the fundamental Law of the Creation.

No, my God, thou canſt not give up thy eſſential Rights as Creator: this wou'd be for thee to degrade thy ſelf. Thou canſt pardon the guilty Soul, that has outragiouſly offended thee, becauſe thou canſt fill it with thy pure Love; but thou canſt not ceaſe to be againſt the Soul that appropriates all thy Gifts to itſelf, and that refuſes to make an offering of itſelf by a ſincere and diſintereſted Love to its Creator. To fear thee only, this not to offer *ſelf* to thee; it is on the contrary not to think of thee but with regard to *ſelf*. To love thee only for the Advantages to be found in thee; this is ſtill to ſubordinate thee to *ſelf*, inſtead of making a Sacrifice of *ſelf* to thee. What then muſt be done in order to give our ſelves totally in Homage to the Creator?

We muſt renounce, forget, loſe our ſelves, eſpouſe thy Intereſts, O my God, againſt our own; have no more either Will, or Glory, or Peace, but thine: in a word, it is is to love thee without loving our ſelves.

O how many Souls who depart this Life, full fraight with Virtues and good Works, ſhall want this perfect Purity, without which none can ſee God; and who for want of being found in this State of pure and total Sacrifice of the Creature to its Creator, ſhall have need to be purified by that jealous Fire, which in the other Life conſumes every thing that attaches the Soul to itſelf! Thoſe Souls ſhall not enter into God till they have entirely quitted themſelves. In this Tryal, by an inexorable Juſtice, all the Remains of Selfiſhneſs are the Fuel of that purifying Fire. Alas! how many Souls are there who rely upon their Virtues, and who will not underſtand what it is to make a perfect Renunciation of themſelves! They think this to be a hard Saying, and they are offended at it; but how dear will it coſt them to have neglected it! They ſhall pay a hundred Fold for their ſelfiſh Reflections, and the vain Conſolations, which they ſhall not have had the Courage to relinquiſh.

To return. Such then is the greatneſs

of

of God, that he can do nothing but for himſelf and for his own Glory. 'Tis this incommunicable Glory of which he is ſo neceſſarily jealous, and which he cannot give, as he ſays himſelf †, to another. On the other hand, ſuch is the meanneſs of the Creature, and its dependent Condition, that it cannot without making itſelf a falſe Divinity, and without violating the immutable Law of its Creation, do any thing, ſpeak any thing, think any thing, will any thing for itſelf and for its own Glory.

O *Nothing*, thou wouldſt glorify thy ſelf! Thou art not, but upon condition that thou never be any thing in thine own Eyes; thou art not for any other end, but him, who makes thee to be. He owes himſelf all to himſelf; thou oweſt thy ſelf all to him: he can abate nothing of it; whatſoever he ſhould leave thee for thy ſelf would be by Tranſgreſſion of the inviolable Laws of his Wiſdom and Goodneſs. A ſingle Inſtant, a ſingle Sigh, allow'd to thy proper Intereſt independent of the divine Will, would be eſſentially to oppoſe the Creator's End in the Creation. He has no need of any thing; but he will have all, becauſe all is his due, and becauſe all is not too much for him, ſuch

† *Iſa.* xlii. 8.

is

is his Greatneſs. This very Greatneſs is the reaſon why he can produce nothing without, but what is totally for himſelf: 'tis his own good Pleaſure which he ſeeks in the Creature; he has made the Heaven and the Earth for me, but he cannot ſuffer, that willingly and by choice I make a ſingle Step for any other End but the Accompliſhment of his Will. Before he brought forth his Creatures, there was no other Will but his. Shall we think that he has made reaſonable Creatures to will otherwiſe than he does? No, it is the ſovereign Reaſon which ſhould enlighten them and be their Reaſon: it is his Will, the meaſure of all good, which ought to will in us: all our Wills ought to make but one and the ſame with his: therefore it is that we ſay to him, *Thy Kingdom come, thy Will be done.*

The better to comprehend all this, we muſt repreſent to our ſelves, that God, who made us of nothing, does in every inſtant, ſo to ſpeak, create us a-new. It no way follows, that, becauſe we were in being yeſterday, we muſt continue to be to day alſo: we might ceaſe to be; and we ſhould really fall back into the Nothing from whence we came, if the ſame Almighty Hand which drew us thence did not prevent our ſinking.

We

We are nothing of our ſelves; we are but juſt what God makes us to be, and only for the time he pleaſes: he has but to withdraw his Hand which bears us, to plunge us back into the Abyſs of our Nothing, as a Stone ſuſpended in the Air falls by its own Weight the Moment it ceaſes to be held. We have then neither Being nor Life but by the Gift of God.

Moreover, there are other Benefits, which being of a more pure and higher Nature, come yet more eſpecially from him. A good Life is ſtill more valuable than Life: Virtue is more precious than Health; Uprightneſs of Heart and the Love of God are farther above temporal Bleſſings than the Heavens are above the Earth. If then we are incapable without divine Aſſiſtance to enjoy for a ſingle Moment thoſe meaner and coarſer Gifts, how much more evidently neceſſary is it, that thoſe ſublime Gifts of his Love, of Diſ-engagement from *ſelf*, and of all the Virtues, be entirely owing to his Bounty?

To regard thee then, O my God, as an Almighty Being without us, who gives Laws to all Nature, and who has made whatſoever we behold, this is not to know thee; it is but to know a part of what thou art; 'tis to be ignorant of what is the moſt marvellous

vellous in thee, and of what the moſt nearly concerns thy reaſonable Creatures. That which tranſports me, that which ſoftens me into Tenderneſs is, that thou art the God of my Heart, thou doeſt there whatſoever thou pleaſeſt. When I am good, it is thou who makeſt me ſuch: thou not only turneſt my Heart according to thy Pleaſure, but thou likewiſe giveſt me a Heart after thy own. 'Tis thou who loveſt thy ſelf in me; 'tis thou who animateſt my Soul, as my Soul does my Body: thou art more intimately preſent to me than I am to my ſelf: this *ſelf* of which I am ſo tender, and which I have lov'd ſo much, ought to be in compariſon of thee as a Stranger to me: 'tis thou who gaveſt it to me; without thee it would be nothing: this is the reaſon why thou wilt have me love thee more than it.

O incomprehenſible Power of my Creator! O right of the Creator over the Creature, which the Creature will never ſufficiently comprehend! O wonder of Love which God only can effect! God interpoſes, as I may ſay, betwixt me and *ſelf*; he divides me from my ſelf: he will be nearer to me by his pure Love than I am to my ſelf: he will have me look upon this *ſelf* as an utter Stranger, he will have me quit the

narrow

narrow Bounds of this *self*, he will have me ſacrifice it to him without looking back, and return it all entire, and without reſerve to the Creator, from whom I receive it. What I am ought to be far leſs dear to me than he by whom I am. He made me for himſelf, and not for me, that is, to love him, to will what he wills; and not to love my ſelf in purſuing my own Will. If any one feels his Heart riſe againſt this entire Sacrifice of *ſelf* to him that made us, I deplore his Blindneſs, I pity to ſee him his own Slave, and I pray God to deliver him, in teaching him to love without regard to Self-Intereſt.

O, my God, I diſcover in thoſe Perſons who are offended at thy pure Love, the Darkneſs and Rebellion which original Sin has caus'd. Thou madeſt not the Heart of Man with this Inclination to ſuch a monſtrous Self-hood. That Uprightneſs in which the Scripture tells us he was created, conſiſted only in his not being his own, but in living to him who made us for himſelf. O Father, Father, thy Children are quite diſfigur'd, and reſemble thee no more! They are provok'd, they are diſcourag'd, when but mention is made to them of being thine as thou art thy own. In overturning

turning this Order, which is ſo juſt, they fooliſhly ſeek to make Deities of themſelves: they deſire to be their own, to do all for themſelves, or at leaſt not to give themſelves to thee, but with reſerves on certain Conditions, and for their own Intereſt. O monſtrous Selfiſhneſs! O Rights of God unknown! O Ingratitude and Inſolence of the Creature! Wretched *Nothing*, what haſt thou to keep for thy ſelf? What haſt thou of thy own? What haſt thou that comes not from above, and that ought not to be return'd thither again? All (even to this *ſelf* ſo injurious, that would divide with God his own Gifts) is a Gift of God made only for himſelf: every thing that is in thee cries out againſt thee for the Creator. Be ſilent then, O Creature, who robbeſt thy Creator of thee, and reſtore thee wholly to him.

But, O my God! what a Conſolation is it to think, that every thing, whether within or without me, is the Work of thy Hand! Thou art continually with me. When I do evil, thou art within me reproaching me the Evil I do, inſpiring me with regret for the good which I forſake, and pointing me out Mercy, that reacheth forth its Arms to receive me. When I do what is good, 'tis thou

thou who inſpireſt me with the Deſire of it, and who doeſt it in me; 'tis thou who in my Heart loveſt the Good, and hateſt the Evil, who ſuffereſt, who prayeſt, who edifieſt my Neighbour, who giveſt Alms: I do all theſe Things, but it is by thee; thou makeſt me do them; thou putteſt them in me. Theſe good Works, which are thy Gifts, become my Works, but they are ſtill thy Gifts, and they ceaſe to be good Works, the moment that I look upon them as mine, and that thy Gift, from whence they derive all their Value, is forgotten by me.

Thou art then (and I am raviſh'd with the Thought) continually at Work in the very Center of my Being: Inviſibly thou workeſt there, as a Labourer digging Mines in the Bowels of the Earth; Thou do'ſt all, and the World perceives thee not; it attributes nothing to thee; I my ſelf was once wandring aſtray in the vain Attempts to find thee at a great Diſtance from me: I was drawing together in my Mind all the Wonders of Nature, that I might thereby form to my ſelf ſome Image of thy Greatneſs; I was going to enquire after thee of thy Creatures; and I never thought of finding thee in the Center of my Heart, where thou never ceaſedſt to dwell. No, my God,

we need not dig into the heart of the Earth, nor paſs beyond the Seas; we need not, as thy holy Oracles tell us, * fly up into the Heavens to find thee: thou art nearer to us than we are to our ſelves.

O God, who art at once ſo great and ſo familiar; ſo exalted above the Heavens, and ſo proportion'd to the lowneſs of the Creature; ſo immenſe, and ſo deeply lodg'd in the Center of my Heart; ſo terrible, and ſo amiable; ſo jealous, and ſo gentle to thoſe who entertain thee with the Familiarity of pure Love; when ſhall it be that thy own Children ſhall ceaſe to be unacquainted with thee? Who will give me a Voice loud enough to upbraid the whole World with its Blindneſs, and, with Authority, to proclaim to it all that thou art? To bid Men ſeek thee in their own Heart, is to propoſe to them to ſeek thee at a much greater diſtance than the moſt unknown Parts of the Earth. What is there more unknown, and more remote to the greateſt part of Men, vain and thoughtleſs, than the bottom of their own Heart? Do they know what it is ever to enter into themſelves? Have they ever try'd to find the way? Can they ſo much as imagine what that interior Sanctu-

* *Deut.* xxx. 11. *Rom.* x. 6.

ary is, that impenetrable Center of the Soul where thou deſireſt to be ador'd in Spirit and in Truth? They are continually out of themſelves among the Objects of their Ambition or Amuſement. Alas! how ſhould they underſtand heavenly Truths, ſince even earthly ones, as *Jeſus Chriſt* tells us *, go beyond their Conception? They cannot conceive what it is to enter into themſelves by ſerious Reflections; what would they ſay then, ſhould we propoſe to them to come out from thence to loſe themſelves in God?

As for me, O my Creator, with my Eyes ſhut to all external Objects, which are but Vanity and Vexation of Spirit †, I will find in the moſt ſecret Receſs of my Heart an intimate Familiarity with thee by *Jeſus Chriſt* thy Son, who is thy Wiſdom and thy eternal Reaſon, who became a Child, that by his Childhood and the Folly of the Croſs he might depreciate our vain and falſe Wiſdom. 'Tis there that I will, whatever it coſts me, and in ſpite of all my Foreſights and Reflections, become little, fooliſh, and ſtill more deſpiſable in my own Eyes, than in thoſe of all the pretended wiſe. 'Tis there that I will become inebriated with the holy Spirit like the Apoſtles,

* *John* iii. 12. † *Eccl.* i. 14.

and

and conſent, as they, to be made the Laughing-ſtock of the World.

But who am I to think theſe things? It is no more I, a Creature mean and frail, a baſe and ſinful Soul; 'tis thou, O *Jeſu*, eternal Truth, who thinkeſt them in me; 'tis thou who wilt perform them, that thy Grace may triumph the more through the greater Unworthineſs of the Inſtrument.

O God, thou art not known, there are none that know who thou art! *The Light ſhineth in the midſt of Darkneſs, and the Darkneſs cannot comprehend it* *. It is by thee we live, we think, we taſte Pleaſure; and we forget by whom we do them all! We ſee nothing but by thee the univerſal Light, the Sun of Souls, who ſhineſt yet more bright than that of Bodies; and whilſt we ſee nothing but by thee, we ſee not thee! 'Tis thou who giveſt all; to Stars their Light, to Fountains their Waters and their Courſe, to the Earth its Plants, to Fruits their Taſte, to Flowers their Glory and their Perfume, to all Nature its Richneſs and its Beauty, Health, Reaſon, Virtue to Men: thou giveſt all; thou doeſt all, thou diſpoſeſt all: I ſee nothing but thee;

* *John* i. *v.* 5.

all the reſt diſappears as a Shadow before the Eyes of him who has once ſeen thee; and the World ſees thee not! But, alas! he who ſees thee not has never yet ſeen any thing: he has ſpent his Life in the Illuſion of a Dream; he is as if he were not, only yet more wretched; for, as I learn from thy Word, it had been better for him that he had never been born.

For me, my God, where-e'er I go, I find thee always within me. Whatſoever Good I do, 'tis thou who doſt it. A thouſand times have I experienc'd, that, of myſelf, I could neither ſubdue my Temper, nor deſtroy my Habits, nor moderate my Pride, nor follow my Reaſon, nor continue to will the Good that I had once will'd. 'Tis thou who giveſt that Will, who preſerveſt it pure: without thee I am but as a Reed ſhaken by the ſmalleſt Blaſt. Thou haſt given me the Courage, the Uprightneſs, and all the good Thoughts which I have: thou haſt made me a new Heart, that deſires thy Righteouſneſs, and that thirſts after thy eternal Truth; in giving me this, thou haſt even torn away the Heart of the old Man, made up of Dirt and Corruption, jealous, vain, ambitious, reſtleſs, unjuſt, thirſting after Pleaſure. To what Miſery was I abandon'd!

don'd! Alas! could I ever have thought, could I ever have hop'd to be thus converted to thee, and to ſhake off the Yoke of my tyrannical Paſſions?

But here is the Wonder which eclipſes all the reſt: who, but thou, could tear me from my ſelf, turn all my Hatred and all my Contempt againſt my ſelf? It is not I who have done this Work; for it is not by his own Strength that any one gets out of himſelf: there muſt have been then ſome foreign Stay without my own Heart, on which I might ſupport my ſelf, whilſt I pronounc'd Sentence againſt its Wretchedneſs. This Succour muſt needs have been foreign, for I cou'd not find it in me, me, againſt whom I was oblig'd to fight: but it muſt have enter'd deep too, to tear away the *ſelf* from the moſt ſecret lurking Places of my Heart. It is thou, my Lord, who bringing thy Light into the Center of my Soul impenetrable to all others, didſt there ſhew me all my Deformity. I well know, that in ſeeing I have not chang'd it, and that I am ſtill deform'd in thy Eyes: I well know that my own have not been able to diſcover all my Uglineſs; but at leaſt I have ſeen a part of it, and I wou'd willingly diſcover the whole. I ſee my ſelf frightful, but the hope which

I have in thee makes me live in Peace. For I will not either flatter my Vices, or let my Vices diſcourage me. I ſee them then, and I quietly bear the Reproach. I am for thee, O my God, againſt my ſelf; none, but thou, cou'd thus make a Diviſion between me and *ſelf*. This is what thou haſt done within me, and what thou daily continueſt to do, in order to take from me all the Remains of my malignant Life of *Adam*, and to perfect the Formation of the new Man. 'Tis this ſecond Creation of the new Man which is renewed day by day.

I leave my ſelf, O my God, in thy Hands: turn about this Clay, turn it this way and that; give it a Form, then break it to pieces: it is thine; it has nothing to ſay; 'tis enough that it anſwers all thy Purpoſes, and that nothing reſiſteth thy good Pleaſure, for which I am made. Demand, enjoin, forbid; what wilt thou have me to do? What wilt thou have me forbear? exalted, abaſed, comforted, ſuffering, employ'd in thy Work, uſeleſs in every thing; I ſhall ever adore thee equally, by ſacrificing all ſelf-will to thine; I have nothing left, but in all things to ſay with *Mary**, *Be it unto me according to thy word!*

* *Luke* i. *v.* 38.

But

But whilſt thou doſt every thing thus within, thou art not leſs active without. I every where diſcover, even in the ſmalleſt Atom, that mighty Hand which ſuſtains the Heaven and the Earth, and which ſeems to ſport itſelf in conducting the whole Univerſe. The only thing which has perplex'd me, is to comprehend how thou leaveſt ſo much Evil mingled with the Good. Thou canſt not be the Author of Evil: all thy Works are good: whence comes it to paſs then that the Face of the Earth is cover'd with Sins and Miſeries? The Evil ſeems every where to prevail over the Good. It was only for thy Glory that thou madeſt the World, and we are tempted to think that it turns to thy Diſhonour. The number of the Wicked exceeds infinitely that of the Good even within thy Church: almoſt all Fleſh has corrupted its way: the good themſelves are ſo but by Halves, and give me cauſe to ſigh almoſt as much as the others. The whole Creation is in pain, 'tis all in an unnatural State: the Miſery equals the Corruption. Why tarrieſt thou, O Lord, to ſeparate the good from the evil? Haſten thee, give Glory to thy Name; let the Blaſphemers learn how great it is. 'Tis a Debt thou oweſt to thy ſelf to call all things

back into order. I hear the Impious whiſper, that thy Eyes are ſhut to every thing that paſſes here below*. Ariſe, lift up thy ſelf, tread all thy Enemies under thy Feet.

But, O my God, how profound are thy Judgments! thy Ways are higher above ours than the Heavens are above the Earth†. We are impatient becauſe our Life is but as a Moment; on the contrary, thy Long-ſuffering is founded on thy Eternity, before whom a thouſand Years are but as yeſterday when it is paſt‡. Thou holdeſt the Times in thy Power, and Men have no Knowledge of them**: they are impatient, they are offended, they look upon thee as ſinking under the Violence of Iniquity; but thou laugheſt at their Blindneſs and at their miſtaken Zeal.

Thou makeſt me underſtand that there are two ſorts of Evils; one, which Men have done by the ill uſe they have made of their Liberty, contrary to thy Law, and in which thou hadſt no Share; the other, of which thou art the Cauſe††, and which are truly Bleſſings, if conſider'd with reſpect to the Puniſhment and Correction of the Wicked, for which thou appointeſt them.

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* *Eccl.* viii. 12. † *Iſa.* lv. 9. ‡ 2 *Pet.* iii. 8.
** *Acts* i. 7. †† *Amos* iii. 6.

Sin

Sin is the Evil which proceeds from Man: Death, Diſeaſes, Pains, Shame, and all other Miſeries, are the Evils which thou turneſt into Bleſſings, making them a means of repairing the Miſchiefs of Sin. As for Sin, O Lord, thou permitteſt it, that thou mayſt leave Man free, and *in the hand of his own Counſel*, as thy Scriptures expreſs it*. But without being the Author of Sin, what Miracles doſt thou not work with it to ſhew forth thy Glory? Thou makeſt uſe of the Wicked to correct the Good, and by humbling, to render them perfect: thou farther makeſt uſe of the Wicked againſt themſelves, in puniſhing them mutually by one another; but, what is chiefly moving and lovely, thou makeſt the unjuſt Perſecutions of ſome a means to the Converſion of others. How many Perſons are there who were living in the forgetfulneſs of thy Favours, and in the contempt of thy Law, and whom thou haſt brought back to thee, in weaning them from the World by the Injuſtices they have therein ſuffered?

But I perceive, O my God, another Wonder; namely, that thou ſuffereſt a mixture of Good and Evil even in the Hearts of thoſe who are the moſt united to thee: the Im-

* *Eccluſ.* xv. 14.

perfections

perfections which ſtill remain in thoſe good Souls ſerve to humble them, to looſen them from themſelves, to make them feel their own Impotence, to make them run the more ardently to thee, and to make them underſtand, that Prayer is the Source of all real Virtue. O what abundance of Good doſt thou draw out of the Evils which thou haſt permitted! Thy only end then in ſuffering the Evils, is to draw thence the greater Good, and to make thy Almighty Goodneſs ſhine forth by the Art with which thou manageſt thoſe Evils. Thou diſpoſeſt them according to thy Purpoſes. Thou art not the Author of Man's Iniquity; but being incapable to cauſe it, thou only turneſt it one way rather than another, according to thy Pleaſure, for the executing thy divine Purpoſes of Juſtice or of Mercy.

I hear human Reaſon demanding to enter into Judgment with thee, and to penetrate thy eternal Secrets. God had no need, it ſays, to draw Good out of Evil: he needed but at once to prevent all Evil, and to make all Men good: he could have done it: he needed but to do for all Men what he has done for ſome, whom he has raviſh'd out of themſelves by the Charm of his Grace; why has he not done it?

O my God! I know from thy holy Word*, *Thou hateſt nothing that thou haſt made, thou deſireſt not the Deſtruction of any; thou art the Saviour of all*, but thou art ſo of ſome more than of others. When thou ſhalt judge the Earth, thou ſhalt be victorious in thy Judgment: the Creature condemned ſhall ſee nothing but Equity in its Condemnation: thou ſhalt clearly ſhow it, that thou haſt done all to cultivate thy Vineyard which thou oughteſt to have done. It is not thou who art wanting to it, it is wanting to itſelf, it deſtroys itſelf. Man ſees not now all theſe things in particular; for he's unacquainted with his own Heart; he diſcerns neither the Graces that are offer'd him, nor his own Diſpoſitions, nor his internal Reſiſtance. In thy Judgment thou wilt lay him all open to his own Eyes: he ſhall ſee himſelf, he ſhall be terrified at the Sight, he ſhall not be able to avoid ſeeing in an eternal Deſpair what thou ſhalt have done for him, and what he ſhall have done againſt himſelf.

This is what Man underſtands not in this Life: but, O my God, the Moment that he knows thee, he ought to believe this Truth, tho' he does not comprehend it;

* *Wiſd.* xi. 25. 2 *Pet.* iii. 9. 1 *Tim.* iv. 10.

he

he cannot doubt but that thou art, thou, by whom all things exiſt; he cannot doubt but that thou art the ſovereign Goodneſs: it remains then only for him to conclude, in ſpite of all the Darkneſs that ſurrounds him, that, in being favourable to ſome, thou doſt Juſtice to all; much more, thou beſtoweſt Favour, even upon thoſe who ſhall for ever feel the Rigour of thy Juſtice. True it is, the Graces thou giveſt to ſome are not always equally great with what thou giveſt to others; but, in fine, thou giveſt them Graces, and Graces that ſhall render them inexcuſable, when thou ſhalt judge them, or rather when they ſhall judge themſelves, and that the Truth imprinted in their Hearts ſhall pronounce their Condemnation. 'Tis true, thou mighteſt have done more for them; 'tis true, it has not been thy Will ſo to do; but thou haſt will'd every thing that was neceſſary to avoid being charg'd with their Ruin; thou haſt permitted it, thou haſt not been the Cauſe of it; if they have been wicked, it is not for want of thy giving them wherewith to be good; they themſelves have not been willing; thou haſt left them in their Liberty; who can complain of thee for not giving them a more than abundant Grace? The

Maſter who offers to all his Servants the juſt Reward of their Labour, has he not a Right to be more liberal to ſome Particulars? What he gives above the meaſure to theſe, does it afford the leaſt ground to the others to complain of him? Hereby, O Lord, thou ſheweſt, that as the Scriptures ſpeak*, *All thy ways are verity and judgment.* Thou art good to all, but good in different Degrees; and the Mercies which with more uncommon Profuſion thou ſheddeſt abroad upon ſome, are not a rigid Law by which thou obligeſt thy ſelf to beſtow the ſame Bounty on all others.

Hold thy Peace then, O ungrateful and rebellious Creature! thou, who this moment thinkeſt on the Gifts of God, remember that this very Thought is a Gift of God: in the Inſtant that thou art murmuring at the want of his Grace, it is Grace itſelf that gives thee the Attention to conſider his Gifts. Far from murmuring againſt the Author of all Bleſſings, haſten to make Advantage of thoſe which in this moment he beſtows upon thee: open thy Heart, humble thy feeble Mind, ſacrifice thy vain and preſumptuous Reaſon: Veſſel of Clay, he who made thee has a right to daſh thee in pieces;

* *Pſ.* xxiv. 10. lxxxviii. 15.

and

and far from doing it, behold he is afraid of being obliged to break thee: he threatens thee out of Mercy.

For ever then, O my God! will I ſtifle all Reaſonings in my Heart which tempt me to call in queſtion thy Goodneſs. I know that thou canſt never be otherwiſe than good; I know that thou madeſt thy Work like thy ſelf, righteous, juſt and good, as thou art; but thou woud'ſt not take from it the choice of Good and Evil: thou offereſt it the good; that's ſufficient. I am ſure of this, tho' I know not by what means; but the immutable and infallible Idea which I have of thee not ſuffering me to doubt of it, I cannot have any reaſon ſo ſtrong to think thee in fault with reſpect to any Man, whoſe Heart I know not, and whoſe Heart is not known to himſelf, as thoſe are which I have without number to be aſſured, that that thou wilt never condemn any Man till thou haſt render'd him inexcuſable in his own Eyes. Here's enough to make me ſit down in Peace: if after that I periſh, 'tis becauſe I ſhall deſtroy my ſelf, and, like the *Jews*, ſhall reſiſt the Holy Spirit, which is the internal Grace.

O Father of Mercy! I have no more any thought to philoſophize upon Grace, but to abandon

abandon my ſelf to it in Silence; 'tis Grace that does all in Man, but it does all with him and by him; 'tis then with it that I muſt act and muſt forbear, that I muſt ſuffer, muſt wait, muſt reſiſt; that I muſt believe, muſt hope, muſt love: in following all its Impreſſions, it will do all in me, and I ſhall do all by it. 'Tis Grace which moves the Heart; but, in fine, the Heart is mov'd, and thou ſaveſt no Man without making him act. Thus then it is my Buſineſs to labour without loſing a moment, that I may not ſtop that Grace which puſhes me on continually: all the Good comes from it; all the Evil comes from me: when I do well, 'tis Grace which animates me: when I do ill, 'tis becauſe I reſiſt it. God forbid that I ſhould deſire to know more about it; all the reſt wou'd but ſerve to nouriſh in me a preſumptuous Curioſity. Keep me, O my God! for ever in the order of thy little ones, to whom thou revealeſt thy Myſteries, whilſt thou hideſt them from the wiſe and prudent of the World.

Now, O great God! I am no longer puzzled at this Difficulty which has often ſtruck my Mind; whence comes it to paſs that ſo good a God has made ſo many Men whom he ſuffers to periſh? whence comes it

that

that he has made his own Son to be born and to die, ſo that his Birth and his Death are uſeful but to ſo ſmall a number of Men? I comprehend, O Almighty Being, that whatſoever thou doeſt, it coſts thee nothing: the Things which we admire, and which are the fartheſt above our reach, are as eaſy and common to thee as thoſe are which we admire leſs, from our being more accuſtomed to them. Thou haſt no need to proportion the Fruit of thy Labour to the Charges of the Work, becauſe no Work whatſoever coſts thee either Effort or Labour; and that the only Fruit, thou can'ſt reap from thy Works, is the Accompliſhment of thy own good Pleaſure: thou haſt no need of any thing; thou can'ſt acquire nothing; thou haſt all within thy ſelf; what thou doeſt without thee, is no way neceſſary either for thy Happineſs, or for thy Glory. Thy Glory then wou'd not be diminiſh'd, tho' not a Man receiv'd the Benefit of the Redeemer's Death. Thou could'ſt have made him come into the World for a ſingle Soul whom thou hadſt predeſtinated; one alone had been ſufficient, if thou wou'd'ſt have had but one; for thou do'ſt all, that thou do'ſt, not for the need thou haſt of the Things, or for their Merit at thy Hands,

but

but to accompliſh thy own free Will, which has no other Rule but it ſelf. Finally, if ſo many Men periſh, tho' waſh'd in the Blood of thy Son, it is, once more, that thou leaveſt them in the uſe of their Liberty; thou art glorified in them by thy Juſtice, as thou art in the Good by thy Mercy; thou puniſheſt not the Wicked, but becauſe they are wicked in ſpight of thee, tho' they had the means to be good; and thou crowneſt not the Good, but becauſe they are become ſuch by thy Grace: Thus I ſee that in thee all is Juſtice and Mercy.

As for all external Evils, O eternal Wiſdom, I have already remark'd what it is, that makes thee permit them. Thy Providence draws thence the greateſt Bleſſings. Men, weak and unacquainted with thy ways, are offended at them; they ſigh for thee, as if thy Cauſe was forſaken; they are ready to believe that thou art ſinking, and that Impiety triumphs over thee; they are tempted to think either that thou ſeeſt not what paſſes, or that thou art not touch'd therewith. But let theſe blind and impatient Men yet wait a little while. The ungodly which triumph, ſhall not triumph long, they wither as the Graſs in the

Field *, which flourishes in the Morning, and in the Evening is trodden under Foot: Death reduces all to Order. Thou art in no haste to overwhelm thy Enemies; thou art patient, as the holy *Austin* says, because thou art eternal; thou art sure of the Stroke that shall crush them; thou holdest thine Arm a long time lifted up, because thou art a Father, because thou never strikest but with Reluctance, in Extremity, and because thou well knowest the Weight of thy Arm. Let then impatient Men be offended; as for me, I look upon whole Ages as a single Minute; for I know that they are less than a Minute in thy Sight. That Succession of Ages, which we call the Duration of the World, is no more than a Scene that's just going to disappear, a Figure that passes, and is ready to vanish away. Yet a little while, O ye that can see nothing, yet a little while, and ye shall see what God is preparing; ye shall see him himself holding his Enemy's under his Feet. What? Ye think this terrible looking for to be at too great a distance! Alas, it is but too near for so great a Number of Wretches! Then shall the Good and Evil be separated for

* *Psal.* xxxvii. 2.

ever, and then, as the Scripture ſaith, ſhall be the time for every thing.*

In the mean while, whatſoever befalls us, it is thou, O my God, who doſt it, and who doſt it for our good. In Eternity we ſhall ſee by thy Light, that what we deſir'd to have would have been fatal to us, and that what we wiſh'd to avoid was eſſential to our Happineſs.

O deceitful Pleaſures. I will never call you Pleaſures, ſince you only ſerve to make us wicked and unhappy! O Croſſes, laid upon me by God, and which cowardly Nature thinks too great a Load, you, that the blind World calls Evils; you ſhall never be ſo eſteem'd by me! Rather had I never ſpeak than talk this curſed Language of the Children of the World: You are my real Bleſſings; 'tis you that humble me, that ſet me free, that make me feel my Miſery, and the Vanity of every thing that I was deſirous of loving here below. For ever bleſſed be thou, O God of Truth, who haſt nail'd me to the Croſs with thy Son, that I might be made conformable to the eternal Object of thy Delights.

* Eccl. iii. 17.

Let no one then tell me, that God obſerves not ſo narrowly what paſſes among Men: Ye blind, who thus talk, ye know not even what God is. Seeing every thing, that is, is only by the Communication of his infinite Being, ſeeing every thing that has Intelligence has it only by an Emanation from his ſovereign Reaſon, and ſeeing every thing that acts, acts only by the Impreſſion of his ſupreme Activity; it is he who does all in all; it is he who in every Moment of our Life is the Animation of our Heart, the Motion of our Limbs, the Light of our Eyes, the Underſtanding of our Mind, the Soul of our Soul: All that is in us, Life, Action, Thought, Will, is caus'd by the Impreſſion of that eternal Power, and Life, and Thought, and Will.

How then, O my God, cou'dſt thou be ignorant of that in us, which thou there doſt thy ſelf? How cou'dſt thou be indifferent about the Evils, that are only committed by the internal Reſiſtance, which is made to thee, and about the Good which we no longer do, but whilſt thou takeſt pleaſure to do it thy ſelf in us? This Attention coſts thee no pains: Shouldſt thou ceaſe to have it, all wou'd perish; there wou'd no more be any Creature able either to will,

will, to think, or to subsist. O how far are Men from knowing their own Impotence and *Nothing*, thy Power, and thy Action without bounds, when they imagine that to be attentive and at work in so many Places wou'd make thee weary? The Fire burns wherefoever it is, and of so active and devouring a Nature is it, that, to make it cease to burn, it must be extinguish'd and annihilated: So in God all is Action, Life, and Motion: He is a consuming Fire *, as he says himself: Wherever he is, he does all, and as he is every where, he does every thing in all Places. He brings forth, as we have seen, a perpetual Creation of all Bodies, a Creation continually renewed: No less does he in every Instant create all free and intelligent Creatures; 'tis he who gives them Reason, Will, Good-will, the different Degrees of Conformity of Will to his own; for he gives, as St. *Paul* says, to will and to do †.

This is then, O my God, what thou art, or at least this is what thou dost in thy Works! For none can approach that Source of Glory which dazles our Eyes, to comprehend all that thou art in thy self.

* *Heb.* xii. 29. † *Phil.* ii. 13.

But, in fine, thou makeſt me comprehend and know clearly, that thou employeſt even the Evils and Imperfections of the Creatures to bring about the Good which thou haſt determined. Thou hideſt thy ſelf under the unſeaſonable Viſitor to moleſt the impatient Believer, jealous of his Liberty in following his Employments, and who therefore wants to be diſturbed, that he may die to the pleaſure of being free and methodical in his good Works. It is thou, my God, who makeſt uſe of ſlandering Tongues to wound the Reputation of the Innocent, who ſtand in need of adding to their Innocence the Sacrifice of their Reputation, which they too dearly love. It is thou, who by the evil Offices and malicious Contrivances of the Envious, overturneſt the good Fortune and Proſperity of thy Servants, whoſe Affections are ſtill engaged to that vain Proſperity. 'Tis thou, who hurrieſt to the Grave thoſe Perſons, to whom Life is a continual Danger, and Death a Grace which puts them in Security. 'Tis thou, who makeſt the Death of theſe Perſons a Medicine, exceeding bitter indeed, but exceeding ſalutary for thoſe, who were tied to them by too ardent and too tender a Friendſhip; thus the ſame Stroke which

ſnatches away the one to ſave him, ſets the other free, and prepares him for his own Death by the Death of thoſe who were the deareſt to him. Thus, O my God, doſt thou mercifully ſprinkle Bitterneſs upon every thing, that is not thy ſelf, that ſo our Hearts, which are form'd to love thee, and to live upon thy Love, may be conſtrained, as it were, to return unto thee, whilſt they experience that no Support is to be found elſewhere.

The reaſon of this, O my God, is, that thou art all Love, and by Conſequence all Jealouſy. O jealous God (for it is the Name thou giveſt thy ſelf) a divided Heart provokes thee, but thou haſt pity on a Heart aſtray. Thou art Infinite throughout, in Love, as in Wiſdom, and in Power. When thou loveſt, thou loveſt like God; thou moveſt Heaven and Earth to ſave that which is dear to thee; thou becomeſt Man, a Child, the leaſt of Men, fill'd with Reproaches, dying amidſt the Ignominy and Pains of the Croſs; all this is not too much for Love, for Love, that's infinite in loving. A finite Love, a limited Wiſdom, can never comprehend it: But how ſhou'd finite comprehend what's infinite? It has neither Eyes to ſee it, nor a Heart proportion'd to conceive it. The baſe and nar-

row Heart of Man, and his vain Wisdom, are offended at it, and they discern not God in this Excess of Love: For me, I know him by this Mark of Infinite: 'Tis this Love which is the Cause of all, even of the Evils which we suffer: By the Evils it is that it prepares the real Blessings for us.

But when shall we return Love for Love? When shall we seek after him, who seeks after us, and who bears us in his Arms? 'Tis within his tender and fatherly Bosom that we forget him: 'Tis through the Sweetness of his Gifts that we cease to think of him: What he gives us every Moment, instead of tenderly affecting, does but serve to amuse us. He is the Fountain of all Pleasures; the Creatures are but the rough cast Chanels; and the Chanel makes us count the Source for nothing. His immense Love pursues us every where, and we continually get away from its Pursuits! He is every where, and we see him no where! We think our selves alone when we have none but him: He does all, and we rely not upon him in any thing! We think our Affairs to be all desperate, when we have no resource left us, but what his Providence can furnish, as if Infinite and

Almighty

Almighty Love was able to do nothing! O monſtrous Folly, O Subverſion of the whole Man! No, I will ſpeak no more, the bewilder'd Creature provokes our Remains of Reaſon, it is not to be born with.

Yet thou, O Love, thou beareſt with it, thou waiteſt upon it with a Patience without end, and even ſeemeſt by thy Exceſs of Patience to indulge our Ingratitudes! Even thoſe who deſire to love thee, love thee only for themſelves, for their Comfort, or their Security. Where are thoſe that love but thee alone? Where are thoſe that love thee, becauſe they were made for no other End but that? Where are they? I ſee not one. Are there any ſuch upon Earth? O make ſome, if there be none. To what purpoſe does the whole World ſubſiſt, if we love not thee, and if we love thee not ſo as to loſe our ſelves in thee? This was thy Intention in producing without thee what is not thy ſelf; thy Deſign was to create Beings, who holding all from thee ſhould devote themſelves only to thee.

O my God, O Love, love thy ſelf in me, ſo ſhalt thou be lov'd as thy Lovelineſs deſerves. I will not ſubſiſt, but to ſpend my ſelf in thy Preſence, as a Lamp continually burns before thy Altars. I am not for my

ſelf:

ſelf; There is nothing for itſelf but thou alone: Nothing for me, all for thee; it is not too much. I am jealous of my ſelf for thee againſt my ſelf. May I rather periſh than ſuffer that the Love which ought to tend to thee ſhould ever be turn'd back upon my ſelf. Love, O Love, love in thy feeble Creature, love thy own Sovereign Beauty. O Goodneſs infinite! O Love unbounded! burn, conſume, tranſport, annihilate my Heart, make it a perfect Sacrifice.

Advice concerning Prayer, &c.

I. THE moſt excellent Prayer is no other thing than the Love of God. The Excellency of this Prayer conſiſts not in the Multitude of the Words which we pronounce; for without having any need of our Words, God is thoroughly acquainted with our Thoughts. The true Petition then is that of the Heart, and the Heart petitions not but by its Deſires. *To pray* then, is to deſire; but it is to deſire what God would have us deſire. He who *deſires* not from the bottom of his Heart offers a deceitful

deceitful Prayer. Tho' he ſhould paſs whole Days in reciting of Prayers, or in meditating, or in ſtirring himſelf up to pious Thoughts, yet he does not truly pray, unleſs he deſires what he asks for.

II. O how few People are there who pray! For where are thoſe who deſire the real Bleſſings? Theſe Bleſſings are outward and inward Croſſes, Humiliations, the renouncing of their own Will, Death to themſelves, the Eſtabliſhment of God's Kingdom upon the Ruins of Self-love; not to deſire theſe things is not to pray: If we would pray, we muſt deſire them ſeriouſly, in earneſt, conſtantly, and with regard to every Circumſtance of Life; Prayer is otherwiſe but an Illuſion, like a fine Dream, wherein a miſerable Wretch rejoices in the imagin'd Poſſeſſion of a Felicity, that is very far from him. Alas, how many Souls are there full of themſelves, and of an imaginary Deſire of Perfection in the midſt of all their voluntary Imperfections, who have never pray'd this true Prayer of the Heart! It was upon this Principle that St. *Auſtin* ſaid, *He who loves little, prays little; he who loves much, prays much.*

III. On the other hand, we never ceaſe to pray, ſo long as we continue to have the

true

true Love, and the true Desire in the Heart. Love hidden in the inmost part of the Soul prays without respite, even in the time when the Mind cannot be in an actual Attention. God never ceases to look upon the Desire which he himself has form'd in this Soul, and which it does not always perceive itself. This Desire in the Disposition and Bent of the Soul touches the Heart of God: It is a secret Voice which continually draws down his Mercies; 'tis that Spirit which, as St. *Paul* says, *groaneth in us with Groanings that cannot be uttered, he helpeth our Infirmities* *.

IV. This Love solicits God to give us what we want, and to consider less our Frailty than the Sincerity of our Intentions. This Love even wipes out our lesser Failings, and purifies us as a consuming Fire; *it asks in us, and for us, that which is according to the Will of God* †. For not knowing what is fit to ask, we shou'd oftentimes ask what wou'd be hurtful to us; we should ask for certain Fervours, certain pleasing Sensations, and seeming Perfections, which would only serve to nourish in us the natural Life, and a Confidence in our own Strength;

* *Rom.* viii. 26. † *Rom.* viii. 15.

whereas

whereas this Love, in blinding us, in delivering us up to all the Operations of Grace, and in putting us into a State of Reſignation to every thing that God ſhall think fit to do in us, diſpoſes us for all his ſecret Deſigns.

V. 'Tis then we conſent to every thing, and we will nothing. What God ſhall think fit to give us is preciſely what we have deſir'd; for we will every thing that he wills, and nothing farther. Thus this State includes all Prayer. It is an Operation of the Heart which comprehends in it all Deſire. *The Spirit asketh in us* that which the Spirit itſelf will give us. When we are buſied about things without, and that we ſuffer an unavoidable Diſtraction by the Employments in which pure Providence engages us, even then we always carry within us a Fire, that never goes out, and that on the contrary nouriſheth a ſecret Prayer, which is like a Lamp continually lighted before the Throne of God. *If we ſleep, our Heart waketh* *. *Bleſſed are thoſe whom the Lord ſhall find watching* †.

VI. In order to preſerve this Spirit of Prayer which muſt unite us to God, we

* *Cant.* v. 2. † *Luke* xii. 37.

ought

ought principally to obſerve two things; the one is to nouriſh it; the other to avoid what might make us loſe it.

That which can nouriſh it, is, 1. A regular Method of reading. 2. Actual Prayer at certain Times. 3. Frequent Recollection during the Day. 4. Retirement from the World when we feel a want of it, or when it is adviſed us by experienced Perſons, whom we conſult. 5. And laſtly, the frequenting the Sacraments proportionably to our State.

VII. That which may make us loſe the Spirit of Prayer, ought to fill us with Fear, and to keep us very cautiouſly upon our Guard. Thus we muſt avoid, 1. Prophane Company which diſtracts too much. 2. The Pleaſures which raiſe the Paſſions. 3. Every thing which awakens our Reliſh of the World, and the old Inclinations that have been fatal to us.

The Particulars of theſe two things are numberleſs, and we can only touch upon them in general, becauſe each Perſon has his peculiar Wants.

VIII. To nouriſh this Spirit of Prayer, we muſt chuſe ſuch Books as inſtruct us in our Duties, and in our Defects; which in ſhewing us the Greatneſs of God, at the ſame

time

time teach us what we owe to him, and discover to us how far we are from satisfying the Obligation: For we have no business with a barren sort of reading by which our Heart may be melted and overflow as at some moving Spectacle; *the Tree must bring forth Fruits* *, and we can never believe the Root to be alive, but as far as it shews itself so to be by its Fruitfulness.

IX. The first Effect of sincere Love is a desire to know every thing we ought to do to content the belov'd of our Heart: To do otherwise, is to love our selves under the Pretence of loving God; 'tis to seek in him a vain and deceitful Consolation; 'tis to desire to make God a means to our own Pleasure, and not to sacrifice our selves to his Glory. God forbid that his Children should love him after this manner. We must know and practise every thing, without reserve, that he demands of us, whatever it may cost us.

X. For the time of Prayer, it must be regulated by the Leisure, State, Disposition, and attractive Grace of each Person.

Meditation is not Prayer, but it is the essential Foundation of it. It is of use to

* *Matt.* vii. 17.

fill

fill our Minds with the Truths, that God has revealed. We must therefore be thoroughly acquainted not only with all the Mysteries of *Jesus Christ*, and the Truths of his Gospel, but likewise with every thing that those Truths ought personally to imprint in us for our Regeneration: These Truths must penetrate us for a long time, as the Colour by little and little sinks into the Wool, that is to be dyed.

XI. These Truths must become familiar to us, insomuch that by seeing them near and at all times, we may be accustomed to judge no more of any thing, but by them: They must be our only Light for judging in what concerns our Practice, as the Rays of the Sun are our only Light for perceiving the Figure and Colour of all Bodies.

When these Truths have, so to speak, thus incorporated themselves into us, 'tis then that our Prayer becomes real and fruitful: 'Till then it was but the Shadow of Prayer: We thought that we thoroughly understood these Truths, and we saw no farther than the outward Shell. All our most tender and lively Sentiments, all our firmest Resolutions, all our clearest and most distinct Notions were but a poor and unform'd Bud of what God discloses in us.

XII. When

XII. When his divine Light begins to enlighten us, we then ſee in the true Light; there is then no Truth but what we acquieſce in, the Moment it is diſcovered to us; as we have no need of reaſoning to acknowledge the Brightneſs of the Sun from the very Inſtant that it riſes and ſtrikes our Eyes. Our Union then with God in Prayer muſt be the Fruit of Fidelity in following all his Will. It is thence that we may judge of our Love for him.

XIII. Our Meditation muſt become every Day more profound and intimate; I ſay *profound*, becauſe when we meditate humbly upon theſe Truths, we dive deeper and deeper therein for the diſcovering of new Treaſures: I add *intimate*, becauſe, as we dig farther and farther to enter into theſe Truths, ſo theſe Truths likewiſe ſtill penetrate more and more into us, that they may enter into the very Subſtance of our Soul. 'Tis then that a ſingle word quite ſimple enters farther than entire Diſcourſes.

XIV. The ſame things which a hundred times we had heard coldly, and without any Fruit, nouriſh the Soul with a hidden Manna, in which we taſte infinite Pleaſures for ſeveral Days together. In fine, we muſt take great care that we don't diſcontinue

to feed our ſelves with certain Truths by which we have been touch'd, ſo long as there remains in them any Nouriſhment for us: While they have any thing farther to give us, 'tis a certain Sign that we have need to receive from them; they nouriſh us oftentimes even without any particular and diſtinct Inſtruction: It is an unknown ſomething, that operates more than all reaſoning: We ſee a Truth, we love it, we repoſe in it, it fortifies the Heart, it diſengages us from our ſelves; we muſt dwell upon it in Peace, as long as we are able.

XV. For the manner of meditating, it ought neither to be too refin'd, nor full of great Reaſonings. Reflections that are ſimple, natural, and immediately flowing from the Subject on which we meditate, are what we ſhould make uſe of.

We muſt meditate but few Truths, and conſider them at leiſure, without Labour, without ſeeking for extraordinary Thoughts.

We ſhould conſider no Truth, but with reſpect to the Practice. To fill our Minds with a Truth, without taking all neceſſary Meaſures to follow it faithfully, whatever it may coſt us, is to deſire * *to hold the*

* *Rom.* i. 18.

Truth

Truth in Unrighteousness, as St. *Paul* expresses it; 'tis to resist that Truth imprinted in us, and by Consequence the Holy Ghost *, which is the most dreadful of all Infidelities.

XVI. For the Method of praying, it shou'd depend on the Experience we have therein. Those who find themselves well in the Use of an exact Method, ought not to quit it: Those who cannot subject themselves to it, ought yet to respect what is useful to others, and what has been so much recommended by so many pious and experienced Persons. But, in fine, as Methods are made to assist, and not to embarrass, when they happen to be rather a Hindrance than an Aid, we must leave them off.

XVII. The most natural Method in the beginning, is to take a Book, which we must quit as soon as we find our selves recollected by the Passage we have read, and to take it up again when that Passage furnishes no more for our spiritual Nourishment. In general it is certain, that though Truths which we relish most, and which afford us a certain practical Light for the things we have to sacrifice to God, are

* *Acts* vii. 5.

those, in which God discovers to us an Attraction of Grace, which we must follow without Hesitation. *The Spirit bloweth where he listeth* *. *Where the Spirit is, there is Liberty* †.

Our Reflections and Reasonings afterwards diminish by little and little. Affectionate Sentiments, moving Considerations, fervent Desires augment: The reason is, we are sufficiently instructed and convinc'd by the Operations of the Mind: The Heart relishes Truth, is nourish'd, warm'd, inflam'd, one word is enough to employ us a long time.

XVIII. In fine, Prayer goes always on increasing by Views more simple and fix'd; so that we have no longer any need of such a Multitude of Objects and Considerations. We are with God as with a Friend. At first we have a thousand things to say to our Friend, and a thousand to ask of him: But in time all this Matter of Conversation is drain'd, and yet the pleasure of the Intercourse cannot cease. We have said all; but without speaking we take pleasure to be together, to see each other, to find that we are near each other, to repose our selves

* *John* iii. 8. † 2 *Cor.* iii. 17.

in the Satisfactions of a ſweet and pure Friendſhip: We are ſilent, but in this Silence we hear and underſtand each other. We know our ſelves to be agreed in every thing, and that our two Hearts make but one; the one pours itſelf forth continually into the other.

XIX. 'Tis thus that the Intercourſe with God in Prayer comes at length to a ſimple and familiar Union, which is beyond all Diſcourſe. But it is God, who by himſelf alone muſt make this ſort of Prayer in us: And nothing wou'd be more raſh and dangerous, than to attempt to intrude our ſelves into it. We muſt let our ſelves be conducted ſtep by ſtep by ſome Perſon who is acquainted with the ways of God, and who ſettles for a long time the immoveable Foundations of an exact Inſtruction, and of an entire Death to *ſelf* in every thing that regards our Practice.

XX. For Retirements and frequenting the Sacraments, we muſt govern our ſelves by the Advice of the Perſon we confide in. We muſt conſider our Wants, the Effect which the Communion produces in us, and many other Circumſtances peculiar to each Perſon.

XXI. Retirements depend on our Leisure, and the need we have of them. I say the *need*; for in nourishing the Soul, we must act as in nourishing the Body: When we can't go through a Work without a certain Nourishment, we must take it; otherwise we run the hazard of fainting. I add the *Leisure*; for except in the case of this absolute want of Nourishment, which we have mentioned, we must fulfil the Duties of our Station, rather than follow the Fervour of our Disposition. A Man who is engag'd to the Publick, and who shou'd spend the time allotted for the Exercise of his Function in meditating in Retirement, would be wanting in his Duty to God, while he imagin'd to unite himself to him. The true Union with God, is to do his Will without Intermission, and to do it in spight of all his natural Distrelish; in all the most irksom and painful Duties of his State and Condition.

XXII. As for the Precautions to be taken against Distractions in general, they are these. We must avoid all Intercourses of Continuance and Confidence with Persons, whose Maxims are contrary to Piety, and especially when those contagious Maxims have heretofore seduc'd us. They will easily

ſily open again our Wounds; they have even a ſecret Intelligence within our Heart; we have there a ſoothing, flattering Counſellor always ready to blind, and to betray us.

XXIII. Wou'd you judge of a Man, ſaith the Holy Spirit, *obſerve who are his Friends* *. How can he who loves God, and who deſires to love nothing elſe but for his ſake, chuſe ſuch for his intimate Friends, who neither love nor know God, and who look upon his Love as a Weakneſs? A Heart that's full of God, and that feels its own Frailty, can it ever be at reſt, and at eaſe in the Company of thoſe, who think in nothing as it does, and who are every Moment in a Condition to rob it of all its Treaſure? The Taſte of ſuch Perſons, and that which is given by Faith, are incompatible.

XXIV. I know very well that we cannot, and even that we ought not to break with certain Friends, to whom we are engag'd, by our Eſteem of their good natural Qualities, by their Services to us, by the Bond of a ſincere Friendſhip, or laſtly, by the outward Decency of a polite and

* *Eccluſ.* xiii. 20.

virtuous Commerce. We cut our Friends to the quick, after a very dangerous manner, when we discontinue altogether a certain Familiarity and Confidence of which they have been in Possession. But without breaking abruptly, and without declaring our Coldness, we may find easy and imperceptible ways of tempering this Intercourse. We see them in private; we distinguish them from half Friends; we open our Heart to them upon certain things, where worldly Probity and Friendship are sufficient to put them in a Capacity to give prudent Counsels, and to think as we do, tho' we think the same things with them upon Motives more pure and more exalted. In fine, we serve them, and we do them all the good Offices of a cordial Friendship, without giving up our Heart.

XXV. Without this Precaution, all is in danger, and if from the very beginning we don't get the upper Hand to make our selves free and independent of these prophane Friends in the Practice of our Piety, it is a Piety that threatens an approaching Fall. If a Man that is beset with such Friends is frail by his natural Temper, and if his Passions are easily inflam'd, it is certain that even his sincerest Friends will

be

be thoſe who will again entangle him. They are, if you pleaſe, good-natur'd, Men of Worth, full of Fidelity, and of every thing that, according to the World, renders Friendſhip perfect: 'Tis no matter, their Converſation is infectious. The more amiable they are, the more to be fear'd. As for thoſe who have none of theſe valuable Qualities, we muſt give them up; too happy! that ſuch a Sacrifice, which ought to coſt us ſo little pain, ſhou'd be worth to us ſo precious a Security for our eternal Salvation.

XXVI. Beſides that we muſt chuſe with great Carefulneſs the Perſons we ſee; we muſt likewiſe reſerve the neceſſary Hours for ſeeing God only in Prayer. Thoſe who are in conſiderable Employments have ſo many indiſpenſable Duties to fulfil, that they have but very little of their Time remaining to be with God, unleſs they apply themſelves diligently to manage it well. If they have but never ſo ſmall an Inclination to Amuſement, the Time deſtin'd for God and their Neighbour is entirely loſt.

We muſt then be firm in ſetting our ſelves a Rule. A rigid Strictneſs in obſerving it ſeems exceſſive; but without it all falls into Confuſion: We become diſſipated; we relax; we loſe our Strength; we inſen-

sibly wander from God; we give our selves up to our Inclinations; and we begin not to be aware of our being gone astray, till we are got so far out of the way, that we dare hope no more ever to find it again.

Let us then pray, let us pray without ceasing. Prayer is our only Safety. *Blessed be the Lord who hath not withdrawn my Prayer, nor his Mercy from me* *. To be faithful to Prayer, we must be faithful to regulate all the Employments of the Day with a Firmness that is never to be shaken.

Of Aridity and Distractions in Prayer.

WE are tempted to think that we pray no longer than while we continue to taste a certain Pleasure in Prayer. To undeceive our selves, we must consider that perfect Prayer, and the Love of God, are the same thing.

Prayer then is neither a sweet Sensation, nor the Charm of an inflam'd Imagination,

* *Psal.* lxvi. 20.

nor

nor the Light of the Underſtanding, which diſcovers with Facility ſublime Truths in God, nor even a certain Conſolation in beholding God: All theſe are extraneous Gifts, without which Love may ſubſiſt, and is ſo much the more pure, as being deprived of all theſe things, which are but the Gifts of God, we adhere ſolely and immediately to God himſelf.

This is the *Love of pure Faith*, which makes Nature deſolate, becauſe it leaves it no Support: It thinks that all is loſt; and it is thereby that all is gain'd.

Pure Love is in the Will only; ſo that it is not a Love that may be ſenſibly felt, for the Imagination has no ſhare in it. It is a Love that loves without feeling, as pure Faith believes without ſeeing. We muſt not fear that this Love is imaginary; for nothing is leſs ſo than the Will diſengag'd from all Imagination: The more purely intellectual and ſpiritual our Operations are, the more they have not only of the Reality, but of the Perfection which God requires: The Operation then of it is the more perfect on that Account; at the ſame time Faith is exercis'd, and Humility preſerv'd in it.

'Tis

'Tis then that Love is chaſte; for it is God in himſelf, and for himſelf, and not the Pleaſure he makes us feel to which we cleave; we follow him, but it is not for the multiply'd Loaves.

What, will it be ſaid, does the whole of Piety conſiſt only in a Will to unite our ſelves to God, which perhaps ſhall be rather a Thought, or an Imagination, than a real Will?

If this Will is not ſuſtain'd by Fidelity, in the principal Occaſions, I ſhall think that it is not real; for the good Tree bringeth forth good Fruits: And this Will ſhould produce an Attention to accompliſh the divine Will; but in this Life it is compatible with little Frailties, which God leaves in the Soul to humble it; if then we experience only thoſe daily Frailties, we muſt gather thence the Fruit of Humiliation without loſing Courage.

But, in fine, true Virtue and pure Love are in the Will only. Is it not a great deal to will always the ſovereign Good as ſoon as we perceive it? To return our Intention towards it the Moment we remark its having declin'd from it? Never to will any thing deliberately, but according to its Order, and in fine, to continue ſubmitted in a Spirit of Sacrifice and Reſignation to it, when

when we have no more any ſenſible Comfort. Do you count it for nothing to cut off all the unquiet Reflections of Self-love; to walk always without ſeeing where we go, and without ſtopping; never to think with Complacency upon *ſelf*, or at moſt to think of it only as one wou'd think of another Perſon, for the fulfilling a Duty in the Order of Providence in the preſent Moment, without looking farther? Is it not this which gives Death to the old Man, ſooner than all the beautiful Reflections, wherein Self-love ſtill engages us in Self-occupation; and ſooner than many external Performances by which we ſhould be carried to bear Teſtimony to our ſelves of our own ſpiritual Progreſs?

'Tis by a kind of Unfaithfulneſs to the Attraction of pure Faith, that we ſeek always an Aſſurance of our doing well: It is to deſire to know what we do, which is what we ſhall never know, and what it is God's Will we ſhould be ignorant of: It is to amuſe our ſelves in the way, in order to reaſon about the way itſelf. The ſureſt and the ſhorteſt way is to renounce, forget, abandon, never more to think of our ſelves, but when Fidelity to God requires it. All Religion conſiſts ſolely in going out of our

ſelves,

ſelves, and of our Self-love, that we may tend towards God.

For Diſtractions that are involuntary, theſe diſtract not Love, for Love is in the Will, and the Will has never any Diſtractions without its own Conſent. As ſoon as we remark them, we let them drop, and turn again our Thoughts towards God; thus while the outward Senſes of the Spouſe are aſleep, her Heart waketh: Her Love has no Relax. A tender Father does not always think diſtinctly of his Son: A thouſand Objects draw away his Imagination and his Mind, but his Diſtractions never interrupt the paternal Love: Whenever his Son returns into his Thoughts he loves him, he feels in the very inmoſt of his Heart that he has never diſcontinued one Moment to love him, tho' he has ceas'd to think of him: Such ſhou'd be our Love to our heavenly Father; a Love that's ſimple, without Diffidence, and without Diſquiet.

If the Imagination wander, if the Spirit be drawn away, let us not be troubled: Theſe Powers are not the true Man of the Heart, *the hidden Man*, of which St. *Peter* ſpeaks *, *which is in the Incorruptibleneſs*

* 1 *Pet.* iii. 4.

of

of a meek and quiet Spirit. We need only make a good uſe of thoſe Thoughts we are Maſters of, in turning them always to the Preſence of the Beloved, without diſquieting our ſelves about the reſt: It is the Work of God to increaſe, when he ſhall think fit, that ſenſible Facility of preſerving his Preſence.

Oftentimes he takes it from us for our Advancement: For this Facility amuſes us by too many Reflections: Theſe Reflections are real Diſtractions, which interrupt the ſimple, and direct beholding of God, and which by that means draw us out from the Darkneſs of pure Faith.

In theſe Reflections we often ſeek the Repoſe of Self-love, and a Conſolation in the good Teſtimony we deſire to give to our ſelves: Thus we become diſtracted by this ſenſible Fervour; and on the other hand, we never pray ſo purely, as when we are tempted to think that we don't pray at all: We are then afraid of praying amiſs: But the only thing we ought to fear, is to give way to the Faintheartedneſs of cowardly Nature, to philoſophical Infidelity, which deſires always to demonſtrate to itſelf its own Operations in the Life of Faith; in

fine,

fine, to the impatient Desires of seeing and feeling, that we may be comforted.

There is no Penance more bitter than this State of pure Faith without sensible Support: Whence I conclude that it is the Penance the most real, the most crucifying, and the most exempt from all Illusion. Strange Temptation! We impatiently seek for sensible Comfort out of fear of not being sufficiently penitent! Ah, why don't we practise for Penance the renouncing of that Consolation, which we are so tempted to seek after? In fine, we must call to mind *Jesus Christ*, whom his Father abandon'd upon the Cross: God withdrew all comfortable Sentiment and Reflection, that he might hide himself from *Jesus Christ*: This was the finishing Stroke of the Hand of God, which smote that Man of Sorrows; This was what consummated the Sacrifice. We must never abandon our selves more to God, than when he seems to forsake us. Let us receive therefore the Light and the Comfort when he sheds it upon us, but without attaching our selves to it: When he plunges us in the Night of pure Faith, let us readily enter into that Darkness, where all is Agony.

One

One Moment in this Tribulation is worth a thouſand: We are troubled, and we are in Peace: God not only hides himſelf from us, but he hides us alſo from our ſelves, to the end that all may be in Faith. We feel our ſelves diſcourag'd, and yet we have an immoveable Will that wills every Severity which God wills: We will every thing, we accept every thing, even the Trouble by which we are try'd: Thus we are ſecretly in Peace by the means of this Will, which is preſerv'd in the Center of the Soul for enduring the Conflict. Bleſſed be God who doth ſuch great things in us, notwithſtanding our Unworthineſs.

That the Spirit of God teacheth Men inwardly.

IT is certain from Scripture, that the Spirit of God dwells within us *, that he acts in us, that he prays in us without ceaſing, that he groans in us, that he de-

* *Rom.* viii. *John* xiv.

ſires in us, that he demands in us what we know not to ask our ſelves, that he prompts us on, animates us, ſpeaks to us in Silence, brings to our Mind all Truth, and unites us ſo to him, that we are *but one Spirit with God.* This is what we are taught by Faith. This is what the Doctors the moſt averſe to the interior Life cannot forbear avowing. Yet, notwithſtanding theſe Principles, they always incline to ſuppoſe in the Practice, that it is the external Law, or at moſt a certain Light from outward Inſtruction and Reaſoning, which enlightens us inwardly, and that it is afterwards our Reaſon which acts by itſelf upon this Inſtruction. They make too little account of the internal Teacher, which is the Holy Spirit, and which does all in us. He is the Soul of our Soul: We cou'd not form a good Thought or Deſire but by him. Alas then, how great is our Blindneſs! We reckon as if we were alone in that interior Sanctuary, and, on the contrary, God is more intimately preſent there, than we are our ſelves.

You will perhaps ſay to me; Are we inſpir'd then? Yes, without doubt; but not as the Prophets and Apoſtles. Without the actual Inſpiration of the Spirit of Grace, we

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can neither do, nor will, nor think any good. We are then always inſpir'd; but we continually ſtifle the Inſpiration. God never ceaſes to ſpeak; but the Noiſe of the Creatures without, and of our own Paſſions within deafens us, and hinders us from hearing him. We muſt make every Creature keep Silence; we muſt our ſelves be ſilent, that in this profound Silence of the whole Soul, we may hearken to that ineffable Voice of the Spouſe. We muſt liſten with an attentive Ear, for it is a ſtill ſmall Voice, which is not heard, but by thoſe who hear nothing elſe. O how ſeldom is it that the Soul keeps itſelf ſilent enough for God to ſpeak! The ſmalleſt Murmur of our vain Deſires, or of a Self-love attentive to *ſelf*, confounds all the Words of the Divine Spirit. We perceive very well that he ſpeaks, and that he demands ſomething; but we know not what he ſays, and we are often very glad not to gueſs it. The leaſt reſerve, the leaſt regard to *ſelf*, the ſmalleſt Apprehenſion of hearing too clearly that God demands what we are unwilling to give, diſturbs the internal ſpeaking. Ought we then to be ſurpriz'd if ſo many Perſons even devout, but full of Amuſements, vain Deſires, miſtaken Wiſdom, Confidence in

their Virtues, are not able to hear it, and that they look upon this internal Word as a Chimera of Fanaticks? Alas, what is it they wou'd aim at with their diſdainful Reaſonings? To what purpoſe wou'd be the external ſpeaking of Paſtors, or even of the Scripture, if there was not an internal ſpeaking of the Holy Spirit itſelf, which gives all its Efficacy to the other? The external Word even of the Goſpel would be but an empty Sound without this living and fruitful Word in the Interior. It is *the Letter*, which being alone *killeth*, and *the Spirit* only can *give us Life* *. O Word! O Eternal and Almighty Word of the Father, it is thou who ſpeakeſt in the inmoſt of the Soul. That Word which came from the Redeemers Lips in the Days of his mortal Life, was not accompany'd with ſo much Virtue, nor produc'd ſo much Fruit, but becauſe it was animated by that Word of Life, which is the *Word* himſelf. Thence it is that St. *Peter* ſaith, *To whom ſhou'd we go? Thou haſt the Words of eternal Life* †.

It is not then only the external Law of the Goſpel, which God ſhews us inwardly by the Light of Reaſon and of Faith; it is

* 2 *Cor.* iii. 6. † *John* vi. 69.

his

his Spirit which ſpeaks, which touches, which operates in us, and which animates us; inſomuch that it is this Spirit, that does in us whatſoever Good we do, as it is our Soul which animates our Body, and which regulates all the Motions of it.

'Tis true therefore that we are continually inſpir'd, and that we do not live by the Life of Grace, but ſo far as we partake of this internal Inſpiration. But, O my God, there are few Chriſtians who are ſenſible of it; for there are very few, but what extinguiſh it by their voluntary Diſtractions, or by their Reſiſtance.

This Inſpiration ought not to make us think that we are like the Prophets. The Inſpiration of the Prophets was full of Certainty in the things which God diſcovered to them, or commanded them to do; it was an extraordinary Motion either for revealing of things future, or for working Miracles, or for acting with the Fulneſs of the Divine Authority. Here, altogether on the contrary, the Inſpiration is without diſtinct Light, and without Certainty; it confines itſelf to inſinuate to us Obedience, Patience, Meekneſs, Humility, and all the other Virtues neceſſary to every Chriſtian: It is not a divine Motion for propheſying,

for changing the Laws of Nature, and for giving Commands to Men on the part of God: 'Tis a ſimple Invitation in the Center of the Soul to obey, to ſuffer *ſelf* to be deſtroyed and annihilated agreeably to the Deſigns of the divine Love. This Inſpiration thus taken in its due Bounds, and in its Simplicity, contains nothing more therefore than the common Doctrine of the whole Church; if the Imagination of Men adds nothing to it, it has not of itſelf any Snare either of Preſumption or Illuſion: On the contrary, it holds us in the Hand of God under the Conduct of the Church, aſcribing all to Grace, without injuring our Liberty, and allowing nothing either to Pride or to Imagination.

Theſe Principles being ſettled, we muſt allow that God ſpeaks continually within us*. He ſpeaks in impenitent Sinners; but theſe, deafned by the Noiſe of the World, and of their Paſſions, are not able to hear him: His Word with them paſſes for a Fable. He ſpeaks in Sinners, who are upon their Converſion; Theſe feel the Remorſes of their Conſcience, and theſe Remorſes are the Voice of God,

* *Imit. of J. Chriſt.* Book iii. ch. 3.

which

which upbraids them inwardly with their Vices. When theſe Sinners are truly touch'd, they have no difficulty to comprehend this ſecret Voice; for it is this that ſo pierces them to the quick. It is that two-edged Sword within them, of which St. *Paul* ſpeaks*: It goes even to the dividing of the Soul from itſelf. God makes himſelf be felt, reliſh'd, follow'd: They hear that ſoft Voice, which carries a tender Reproach even into the Center of the Heart, and the Heart is rent thereby. This is the true and the pure Contrition.

God ſpeaks in Perſons enlightned, learned, and whoſe Life exteriorly regular, ſeems adorn'd with many Virtues: But oftentimes theſe Perſons full of themſelves and of their Knowledge, give too much ear to themſelves to liſten to God. They reaſon upon every thing: they form to themſelves Principles of natural Wiſdom, and prudential Methods for all thoſe things, in which we might be better inſtructed by the way of Simplicity, and a Docility to the Spirit of God. Theſe Perſons appear to be good, ſometimes more than others, and even ſo they are to a certain Point; but it is a mix'd Goodneſs. They

* *Heb.* iv. 12.

poſſeſs, and they ever will poſſeſs themſelves according to the meaſure of their Reaſon; they deſire always to remain in the Hand of their own Counſel; they are ſtrong and great in their own Eyes. O my God, I give thee Thanks with *Jeſus Chriſt* *, for that thou hideſt thy ineffable Secrets from theſe great and theſe wiſe ones, whilſt thou takeſt pleaſure to reveal them to feeble and little Souls! It is with Children only that thou uſeſt a Familiarity without reſerve. Thou treateſt the others after their own Faſhion. They will have Knowledge and high Virtues; thou giveſt them ſplendid Light, and makeſt them a kind of Heroes. But this is not the beſt Portion. There is ſomething more hidden for thy dearer Children. Theſe repoſe themſelves with *John* upon thy Boſom. For thoſe great ones, who are always in fear of ſtooping low, and of becoming little, thou leaveſt them in their Grandeur; thou treateſt them ſuitably to their Gravity: they ſhall never have thy Careſſes and thy Familiarities; Children only, and ſuch as play upon thy Lap, can merit theſe. I have often remark'd that a groſs and ignorant Sinner who

* *Matt.* xi. 25.

begins,

begins, in his Converſion, to be truly touch'd with the Love of God, is more diſpos'd to hear this internal Language of the Spirit of Grace, than certain enlightned and learned Perſons, who are grown old in their own Wiſdom. God, who ſeeks only to communicate himſelf, knows not, ſo to ſpeak, where to place his Foot in theſe Souls, that are ſo full of themſelves, and ſo overfed with their own Wiſdom and Virtues: But, as the Scripture ſaith, *his familiar Converſation is with the Simple* *.

Where are they, theſe ſimple ones? I hardly ſee any of them. God beholds them, and it is with them that he delights to dwell: *My Father and I*, ſaith *Jeſus Chriſt, we will come unto them, and we will make our abode with them* †. O how a Soul, that's abandon'd to Grace, without Self-reflection, counting itſelf for nothing, and letting itſelf wholly be conducted at the pleaſure of pure Love, which is the perfect Guide, experiences things which the wiſe and prudent can never experience or comprehend! I have been wiſe and prudent (I may venture to ſay it) as another; but then while I thought that I ſaw all, I ſaw no-

* *Prov.* iii. 32. † *John* xiv. 23.

thing.

thing. I went on groping by a Train of Reasonings; but the Light shined not in my Darkness. I was content with reasoning: But, alas, when we have once impos'd Silence upon every thing in us that we may hearken to God, we then know all without knowing any thing; and we cannot doubt but that till then, we have been ignorant of every thing, that we imagined our selves to comprehend. All that we held escapes us; we are no more concern'd about it; we have no longer any thing of our own; we have lost all, we have even lost our selves. There is a certain I know not what, that cries within us, like the Spouse in the *Canticles*; *Make me to hear thy Voice, let it resound in my Ears* *. O how sweet is this Voice. It makes all my Entrails to leap for Joy. Speak, O my Spouse, and let none other venture to speak but thou alone. Be silent, O my Soul, speak thou, O Love. I say that then, *we know all, without knowing any thing.* 'Tis not that we have the Presumption to think, that we possess all Truth in our selves. No, no: quite the contrary; we are sensible that we see nothing, that we can do nothing, that

* *Cant.* ii. 14.

we

we are nothing. We feel this, and we are raviſh'd at it. But in this Diſappropriation without reſerve, we find from one Moment to another in the Immenſity of God every thing that is neceſſary in the Courſe of his Providence. 'Tis there that we find the daily Bread of Truth, as of every other thing, without making a Proviſion of it. 'Tis then that the Unction teacheth us all Truth, in taking from us all Self-wiſdom, all Self-glory, all Self-intereſt, all Self-will, in keeping us contented in our Impotence, and beneath every Creature, ready to give place to the loweſt Worms of the Earth, ready to confeſs our moſt ſecret Miſeries before the Face of all Men, apprehending nothing in our Failings but our Unfaithfulneſs to God, without fearing either the Punihment, or the Shame. In this State, I ſay, the Spirit teacheth us all Truth; for all Truth is eminently comprehended in this Sacrifice of Love, wherein the Soul ſtrips itſelf of every thing, that it may give all to God. This is the Manna, which without being each Meat in particular, has the Savour of them all.

On the Words:

Lord, teach us to pray. Luke xi. 1.

O Lord, I know not what I ſhould ask at thy Hands. Thou only knoweſt what is needful for us: thou loveſt me better than I can love my ſelf. O Father, give to thy Child what he cannot ask himſelf. I dare not ask either Croſſes or Comforts: I only preſent my ſelf before thee, I open thee my Heart. Behold my Wants, with which I am unacquainted; behold and do according to thy Mercy. Smite or heal; depreſs me, or raiſe me up. I adore all thy Purpoſes, without knowing them; I am ſilent, I offer my ſelf in Sacrifice. I abandon my ſelf. No more any Deſire but to accompliſh thy Will. Teach me to pray; pray thou thy ſelf in me.

Of the Preſence of God.

THE principal Spring of our Perfection is contain'd in that word, which God heretofore ſpake to *Abraham*; *Walk in my Preſence, and be thou perfect* *.

The Preſence of God calms the Spirit, gives a peaceful Slumber and Repoſe, even during the Day-time, in the midſt of all our Labours; but we muſt be reſign'd to God without any Reſerve.

When we have found God, there is nothing more to be ſought for in Men; we muſt make a Sacrifice of our beſt Friends: The good Friend is within the Heart; he is the jealous Spouſe who ſuffers none elſe to abide there.

It requires not much time to love God, to renew in us the Senſe of his Preſence, to lift up our Heart to him, or to adore him in the Center of it, to offer him what we do, and what we ſuffer; this is the true

* *Gen.* xvii. 1.

Kingdom of God within us *, which nothing can disturb.

When the Dissipation of the Senses, and the Vivacity of the Imagination hinder the Soul from recollecting itself after a sweet and sensible manner, we must at least calm our selves by the Rectitude of our Will; the desire of recollecting our selves is then a kind of Recollection, which suffices: We must bring back our Thoughts to God, and perform with an upright Intention whatsoever he would have us do.

We must endeavour to awaken in us from time to time the desire of adhering to God with the whole Extent of the Powers of our Soul, that is, with our Understanding, to know, and to think of him, and with our Will to love him. Let us desire likewise that our exterior Senses may be consecrated to him in all their Operations.

Let us take care that we be not voluntarily too long busied, whether outwardly or inwardly, about unprofitable things. These occasion so great a Distraction to the Heart and Mind, and draw in such a manner both the one and the other out of themselves,

* *Luke* xvii. 21.

that

that they have a Difficulty to enter in again to find God.

The Moment we perceive that any foreign Object gives us Pleaſure and Joy, let us ſeparate our Heart from it: and in order to hinder our Heart from taking its reſt in this Creature, let us preſent to it immediately its true Object, and its ſovereign Good, which is God himſelf. Were we faithful, but never ſo little to break inwardly with the Creatures, that is, to hinder them from entering into the Center of the Soul, which our Lord hath reſerved for his own Habitation, and to be there honour'd, ador'd, and lov'd, we ſhou'd ſoon taſte of that pure Joy, which God will never fail to give to a Soul, that's free and diſengag'd from all human Affection.

When we perceive any eager Deſires in us after any thing, and ſee that our Temper carries us with too much Livelineſs to the doing of whatever there is to do, whether to the ſpeaking of a word, the ſeeing of an Object, the making of a ſtep, let us endeavour to moderate our ſelves, and let us deſire of our Lord to reſtrain the Precipitation of our Thoughts, and the Violence of our external Actions; ſince he hath ſaid

ſaid himſelf, that his Spirit dwelleth not in trouble.

Let us be careful not to take too much Intereſt in what is ſaid or done, nor to fill our Thoughts too much with it: 'Tis a great Source of Diſtractions. As ſoon as we have ſeen *what God demands of us in each thing*, that preſents, let us confine our ſelves to that, and forget all the reſt. By this means we ſhall always preſerve the Center of our Soul free and even, and ſhall cut off abundance of uſeleſs things, which perplex our Heart, and hinder it from turning itſelf readily towards God.

An excellent means to preſerve our ſelves in internal Solitude, and Liberty of Spirit, is, at the Concluſion of every Action, to ſtop there all Reflections ariſing from it, the Returns of Self-love, accompany'd ſometimes with vain Joy, ſometimes with Sadneſs; becauſe theſe are ſome of our greateſt Miſeries. Happy is he, who retains nothing in his Mind but what is neceſſary, and who thinks of each thing only in its proper Seaſon! Inſomuch that it is rather God who awakens the Ideas of them in us by the Impreſſion and View of his Will, which we are to accompliſh, than the Mind itſelf, taking

taking pains to seek, and to foresee them. In fine, let it be our Custom to recall our selves inward in the Day-time, and in the Course of our Employments, by a simple view of God. Let us pacify thereby all the Motions of our Heart, as soon as we see it in Agitation. Let us quit all Pleasure that comes not from God alone. Let us retrench our unprofitable Thoughts and Musings. Let us speak no idle Words. Let us seek God within us, and we shall infallibly find him, and with him Joy and Peace.

In our external Affairs, let us be more taken up with God than with any thing else. To do them well, we must do them in his Presence, and must do all for him. At the look of the Divine Majesty our inward Man shou'd grow calm, and remain compos'd. A word of our Saviour calm'd heretofore a raging Sea: A look from him to us, and from us to him, ought every Day to do the same thing.

We must frequently lift up our Heart to God; he will purifie it; he will enlighten it; he will direct it. This was the daily Practice of the holy Prophet *David*; *I set always*,* says

* *Psal.* xvi. 8.

he, *the Lord before my Eyes*: Let us likewiſe oftentimes repeat theſe beautiful Words of the ſame Prophet; *Whom ſhou'd I ſeek in Heaven but thee, or on Earth beſides thee? O my God, thou art the God of my Heart, and my only Portion for ever* *.

We muſt not wait for Hours of Liberty, when we may ſhut our Door: The Moment in which we lament the want of Recollection may be employ'd to practiſe it. We muſt turn our Hearts towards God after a manner that's ſimple, familiar, and full of Confidence. All the moſt broken Moments are good at all times, even in eating, in hearing others talk: Unprofitable and tedious Stories, inſtead of tiring, refreſh us, by affording Intervals, and the liberty of recollecting our ſelves: Thus every thing turns to Good for thoſe who love God.

We muſt practiſe frequent reading of ſuch things as are adapted to our Reliſh and our Wants, but with frequent Interruptions, that we may give Place to the internal Spirit, that calls us inward. Two Words ſimple and full of the Spirit of God, are the hidden Manna. We forget the Words, but

* *Pſal.* lxxiii. 25, 26.

they

they operate ſecretly: the Soul feeds upon them, and thrives thereby.

We muſt endeavour to have a continual Intercourſe with God. Let us be perſuaded, that the moſt advantagious, and the moſt deſirable State of this Life, is that of Chriſtian Perfection, which conſiſts in the Union of the Soul with God; an Union which includes in it the abundance of all ſpiritual Goods; a Familiarity with God ſo great, that there are no Friends upon Earth who converſe together either oftener, or more tenderly, or with more Facility, Frankneſs, and Openneſs of Heart; a wonderful Liberty of Spirit, which raiſeth us above all the Events of Life, which ſets us free from the Tyranny of human Reſpect; an extraordinary Force for the well performing of all our Actions, and the Diſcharge of our Employments; a Prudence truly Chriſtian in all our Undertakings; a profound Peace and Tranquillity in all kinds of Conditions; and, in fine; a continual Victory over our Paſſions, and our Self-love.

'Tis to this happy State that we are call'd, we, whom God hath ſeparated from the Corruption of the World. If we partake not of theſe heavenly Bleſſings, it is our

own fault, ſince the Holy Spirit diſpoſeth us thereto, and continually excites us to aſpire after them: But we frequently reſiſt him, either by an open Repugnance, or by a ſecret Refuſal, or for want of Reſolution and Courage, or by voluntarily letting our ſelves be cheated by the Pretexts and Artifices of our Self-love, which inſpires us with a thouſand baſe Thoughts and deceitful Self-Indulgences. Let us ſuffer our ſelves no more to be ſeduc'd into them, but become wiſe, as ſaith the Apoſtle, that we may never be turn'd aſide from the right way.

Of Fidelity in little Things.

IT is a Saying of St. *Francis* of *Sales*, that it is with great Virtues and little Fidelities, as with Salt and Sugar. Sugar has a more exquiſite Taſte, but it is not of ſuch frequent uſe: On the other hand, Salt is an Ingredient in all the Nouriſhments neceſſary to Life. The great Virtues are rare. The occaſion for them ſeldom happens.

pens. When it preſents, we are prepar'd for it by every thing preceding; we are excited by the Conſideration of the Greatneſs of the Sacrifice; we are ſupported in it by the Glory of the Action, which we do before the Eyes of others, or by the Complacency we have in our ſelves, when we make an Effort which we think extraordinary. The little occaſions are unforeſeen, they return at every Moment, they ſet us continually at War with our Pride, our Sloth, our Haughtineſs, our paſſionate and peeviſh Humour: they tend to break our Will in every thing, and to leave us no reſerve. If we will be faithful in them, Nature has never any time to recover Breath, and ſhe muſt die to all her Inclinations. We ſhou'd like a thouſand times better to make certain great Sacrifices to God, tho' violent and painful, upon condition of being compenſated by the liberty of following our Inclinations and Habits in all the ſmaller Occurrences. However, it is only by Faithfulneſs in little things that the Grace of true Love is maintain'd, and diſtinguiſh'd from the fleeting Fervours of Nature.

It is in Piety as in the Management of our temporal Concerns: If we don't look narrowly to it, we ruin our ſelves more by

the ſmall Contingencies, than by the great Articles of Expence. Whoever knows how to make Advantage of little things in Spirituals as in Temporals, heaps up great Wealth. All the things that are great, are only ſo by the putting together of little things, that are carefully collected. He who lets nothing be loſt, will very ſoon grow rich.

Furthermore, conſider that God ſeeks nothing in our Actions but the Motive of Love from which we do them, and the Pliableneſs that he requires in our Will. Men hardly judge of our Actions but by the outſide: that which ſhines the brighteſt in them to the Eyes of Men, God accounts for nothing. What he requires is a pure Intention, a Will prepar'd for every thing, a a Will ſupple in his Hands; 'tis a ſincere Diſengagement from our ſelves. All this is exercis'd more frequently, with leſs danger from Pride, and in a manner that puts us to a ſeverer Trial in the common Occaſions, than in thoſe that are extraordinary. Our Affections are ſometimes more engag'd to a Trifle than to a thing of great Value: We ſhall have more Repugnance to deprive our ſelves of an Amuſement, than to give away in Alms a very great Sum.

We deceive our ſelves ſo much the more eaſily in little things, as we think them more innocent, and as we imagine that we have leſs Attachment to them. Yet when God takes them from us, we may readily diſcover by the Pain we ſuffer how much our Attachment to, and our Uſe of them was exceſſive and inexcuſable. Moreover, by the Neglect of little things, we continually give Offence to our Families, to our Domeſticks, and to the whole Publick. Men can never imagine that our Piety is real, when our Conduct appears looſe and irregular in its ſeveral Parts. What ground is there to think, that without Heſitation we ſhould make the greateſt Sacrifices, while as ſoon as the ſmalleſt are requir'd, we ſhrink at the very Thoughts of them?

But that which is the moſt dangerous, is, that the Soul by the Neglect of little things accuſtoms itſelf to Unfaithfulneſs. It grieves the Holy Spirit, it leaves itſelf to its own Conduct, it accounts it nothing to be wanting to God. On the other hand, true Love looks not upon any thing as little: Every thing appears great to it that may pleaſe or diſpleaſe God. Not that true Love throws the Soul into Perplexity and Scruple: but it ſets no Bounds to its Fide-

lity. It acts ſimply with God: and as it troubles not itſelf about things which God does not require of it, ſo will it never heſitate a ſingle Inſtant about thoſe which God does demand, whether they be great or ſmall. Thus it is not by an anxious Solicitude that we then become faithful and exact in the ſmalleſt things: 'tis by a Sentiment of Love which is exempt from the Reflections and Fears of ſcrupulous and unquiet Souls. We are as it were drawn on by the Love of God; we are content with doing what we do, and we have no Will to do any thing that we do not do. At the ſame time that God, jealous of the Soul, urges it, preſſes it forward without reſpite in the ſmalleſt Matters, and ſeems to deprive it of all liberty, it finds itſelf at large, and in him enjoys a profound Peace. O how great is its Happineſs!

Moreover, ſuch as are naturally leſs exact, are thoſe eſpecially who ought to lay themſelves under a more inviolable Law with reſpect to little things. We are tempted to deſpiſe them: we get a habit of counting them for nothing: we don't conſider enough the Conſequences of them: we don't ſufficiently repreſent to our ſelves the inſenſible Progreſs which the Paſſions make:

we

we even forget the moſt fatal Experiences we have had of them. We chuſe rather to promiſe our ſelves an imaginary Conſtancy and Firmneſs, and to truſt to our own Courage, which has ſo often deceiv'd us, than to ſubject our ſelves to a continual Fidelity. 'Tis a mere Nothing, ſay they. Yes, it is a Nothing; but a Nothing, that is all for you; a Nothing which you love ſo much, as even to refuſe it to God; a Nothing which you deſpiſe in Words, that you may have a Pretext to refuſe it: But at the bottom it is a Nothing which you reſerve from God, and which will be your Deſtruction. It is not an Elevation of Mind to deſpiſe little things; on the contrary, it it is from too ſhort a Sight that we look upon thoſe things as little that have ſuch extenſive Conſequences. The greater Pain it gives us to take our Precautions about little things, the more ſhou'd we fear the Neglect of 'em, the more ſhou'd we diſtruſt our ſelves, and take care to fix ſome invincible Barriers againſt Remiſneſs and Relaxation. *Qui ſpernit modica paulatim decidet* *.

* *Eccluſ.* xix. 1.

In fine, be judg'd by your ſelf. Wou'd you be ſatisfy'd with a Friend who owes you all he has, and who very willing out of Duty to ſerve you in thoſe rare Occaſions, which we call great ones, yet wou'd not ſubject himſelf to have either Complacence or regard for you in the common Commerce of Life? Be not afraid of this continual Attention to little things. It requires Courage at firſt; but it is a Penance which you deſerve, which you ſtand in need of, and which will make your Peace, and your Security: Without it nothing is to be expected but Trouble and Relapſe. God will by degrees render this State ſweet and eaſy to you. True Love is attentive without Anxiety, and without Contention of Spirit.

CHRI-

CHRISTIAN
INSTRUCTION
FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE.

CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

A LETTER upon the following INSTRUCTION.

Some Advice about Prayer, and particulary concerning the Driness we may happen to feel in it.

I Have a great Compassion for you, my dear Daughter, knowing your good Will, and the sincere Desire you have to give your self up wholly to God without reserve, and that nevertheless you have not a secure Rule for your Conduct. I know you have Books; but Books, tho never so good, are yet of little use if we don't understand 'em, and don't discern what suits our own Condition,

and

and what is particularly proper for us in the State wherein God has placed us, and in that Vocation to which he has called us. To remedy this as far as I am able, I send you a *short Direction for young People*, which will teach them how to lay a solid Foundation: For there is no want of Instructions for more advanced Persons, except it be for passing some Streights, where they might either lose their way, or go back for want of a Guide; in other Cases such Persons being used to the Conduct of God, follow it very readily.

To begin with Success, I am to tell you, that, besides the observing this Method which I send you, it is of the last Consequence to keep to the little pious Exercises you propose to your self with an inviolable Fidelity. For which reason you ought not to be loaded with Burdens too heavy for you to bear, nor with such Exercises as are inconsistent with your Vocation: For the Yoke of the Lord is easy and Light, and it is his Will that every one should be sanctified in that State of Life which Providence has placed him in, without being obliged to change it. We must then establish such a Piety as shall be lasting. If you would frequently read, *The short and easy*

Method

Method for Prayer, you would find a great many uſeful things in it, and the more you read it, the better you will underſtand it.

As *Prayer* is the moſt eſſential thing in the ſpiritual Life, ſo it is what I moſt inſiſt upon.

They who are conſtant and faithful in the Uſe of it, find the Happineſs of Life in it; and they ſee clearly that in every State we may and ought to apply our ſelves to it; that it is ſo far from being inconſiſtent with any Condition of Life, that on the contrary it perfects all States, and makes us faithfully diſcharge the Duties of our Callings, according to the Deſign and Will of God concerning us.

There are two dangerous Rocks for Beginners: The firſt is, that they frequently periſh for want of Nouriſhment, that is, for want of being diligent and conſtant in nouriſhing their Souls with ſome Truth in Prayer in the beginning. The other is, that when they have laid down a Method, or form'd a Plan of Life for themſelves, they adhere to it ſo ſtrictly, that they will not ſuffer themſelves to be guided by God, to follow his inward Motions by Recollection: not by a forc'd Recollection from the intenſe Application of the Head; but

by

by entering frequently into ones ſelf by frequent [ſpiritual] Acts, by a lively Faith of God's being preſent in the bottom of the Heart, as the little *Method* which I ſend you will ſhew you clearly.

You muſt ſeek God then with all your Heart, and in your Heart, and enjoy his Preſence when he communicates it to you: Which is the Effect, not of a ſtrong Application of the *Head*, but of a gentle Inclination and Tendency of the *Heart* towards God: which you may promote by the Remembrance of what *Jeſus Chriſt* has ſuffered for you, provided you conſider his Myſteries as in your ſelf, not out of you.

As ſoon as you perceive that this ſimple Conſideration has produced in you any Senſe of God's Preſence, ſtop there, and reſt in it, without ſeeking any thing elſe; For then it is that God works in your Soul, or elſe make uſe of your Affections, and of Acts of Love, Truſt, &c. as you will find this Matter explain'd in the little *Method*. At other times throw your ſelf into God, as into a Sea of Love; hide your ſelf in the Wounds of *Jeſus Chriſt* without doing any other thing than remaining ſwallowed up there.

Above all, never let Drineſs, or Diſtaſte, or Weakneſs, make you give over Prayer. When you are not ſenſible of receiving any thing from God in Prayer, then make a *Prayer of Patience*, and teſtify to God, that ſince you come to pray, for no other end but to do his Will, ſince you are there for no other reaſon but to pleaſe him, and not for your own Satisfaction, you will remain there out of Obedience to him. A Beggar waits a long while at a Door before he receives an Alms; he ſuffers Cold, Heat, and Repulſes; and yet he does not quit his hold for all that, but frequently obtains by Perſeverance, what he was denied at firſt asking.

As Drineſs is the Cauſe of our Slackneſs and Remiſneſs in Prayer, and of our quitting it altogether at laſt, and yet is frequently an Attendant upon it, 'tis a Matter of great Conſequence to know how to behave and govern our ſelves in this caſe.

In the firſt Place, we muſt be ſure never to give over Prayer upon the account of Drineſs, but perſevere in it conſtantly to teſtify our Love to God. When God gives us Conſolation in Prayer, he gives us Marks of his Love; but when we meet with Drineſs and Deſolation, and continue in it not-

ſtanding, we then give God Proofs of our Love and Fidelity to him: and in doing thus, as I have been directing, you need not fear being idle and doing nothing. Is a Servant idle when he waits in an Anti-Chamber for his Maſter's Orders? This pretended fear of Idleneſs in Prayer, is one of the ſubtileſt Artifices of the Devil to hinder Prayer. Remain there only expos'd to the Fire without ſtirring your ſelf, and you will certainly feel the Warmth of it. Why does the Scripture tell us* that we *muſt bear with the Suſpenſion and Delay of God's Conſolations*, that we muſt *wait for the Lord, and be patient in Sorrow, that our Life may grow and increaſe?* And in another Place †, *I waited with great Patience for the Lord, and at laſt he inclined unto me:* And again, *My Soul wait for the Lord, for of him only cometh thy Salvation.* Therefore do not apprehend this to be Idleneſs. How can you be ſaid to be idle, when you practiſe a great many Virtues; as *Humility* in believing your ſelf unworthy of any Conſolation; *Fidelity*, the Proof of which is to be given in times of Trouble, not of Conſolation; *Patience*, in abiding by God, notwithſtanding your Uneaſineſs and Pain; *Faith*, in believing that *God ſees* and knows

* *Eccluſ.* ii. 2, 3. † *Pſal.* xl. 1. *the*

the Preparation of the Heart of the Poor, as the Scripture ſpeaks; *Hope*, in hoping againſt Hope itſelf; *Charity*, becauſe you give God the greateſt Proofs of your Love, and that a pure Love, not ſeeking your own Intereſt, but the good Pleaſure of God, whoſe Will it is that you ſhould be in this Condition; *Obedience*, becauſe you are there to obey God, and not for your own Conſolation; *Reſignation*, and perfect Submiſſion to the Will of God, ſince you prefer his Orders before your own Satisfaction.

Secondly; A State of Drineſs is very purifying; it deſtroys Self-love; it conceals from us God's Gifts to us, and what he works in us, and by this means hinders us from appropriating them to our ſelves: It gives us a very low Opinion of our ſelves and of our Works; and takes away a certain Truſt and Reliance we are apt to have upon what we do our ſelves.

Inſtead of being dejected, we ought to be more couragious in time of Drineſs: 'Tis nothing but our Self-love which cauſes our Diſcouragement. God ſends Drineſs for no other reaſon but to oblige us to deny our ſelves, and to make us practiſe in a ſecret and imperceptible manner the

Virtues I juſt now mentioned; and yet we torment our ſelves, we can't bear it, and frequently throw all aſide, and thereby loſe infinite Treaſures of Graces.

God ſends Winter to kill Inſects, and to make Trees take deeper root. The inward and ſpiritual Winter has the ſame Effect; but we are ſo fond and jealous of our own Works and Activity, that we think we loſe when we gain moſt; becauſe the Operation of God, which is fine and delicate, is leſs ſenſible; and our own Operation, which is groſs, is more perceptible; therefore we value nothing but this: As if the Work of a Painter were not more valuable than that of a Labourer! We even hinder the Work of God [in us] by too great Activity, by a certain Solicitude which makes us never content with the State in which God places us. And yet 'tis this Submiſſion to the Will of God in all States, which is the Baſis and Foundation of all Perfection.

When the Drineſs is very great, and the Imagination roving, endeavour gently to recal your Mind inwards by ſome Act [of Recollection.] When you cannot ſucceed after ſeveral Efforts, humble your ſelf profoundly under the mighty Hand of God, and

and remain in Patience. An humble and meek Patience is an excellent Prayer. The more we pray, the more we advance in the Love of God, and in Submiſſion to his holy Will.

As ſoon as ever you perceive any Senſe of God's Preſence which moves you to Recollection, remain in quiet, and ceaſe all Action of your own, to let God act in you, and never go to hinder the Operation of God, by your courſe way of acting.

Beſides Prayer, Reading is alſo very uſeful: you ſhou'd not read much together, but in reading things which have an Unction in them, as ſoon as ever any thing touches you, you muſt quit the Book, to ſuffer your ſelf to be penetrated by that which moved you.

Sometimes one feels the Unction, without knowing any expreſs word that cou'd be the cauſe of it: Our Buſineſs then is to remain calm and recollected, that this Unction or Touch may have the full Effect that God deſigns by it. This is of great Conſequence, and of great Uſe for grounding the Soul in God.

Sometimes it happens that after having been diſtracted and dry in Prayer, we feel our ſelves recollected out of Prayer. We

ought then, if it be in our Power, to retire in private, to let our ſelves be poſſeſſed by God. If we cannot retire, we muſt give a profound Attention inwardly, which is a kind of Correſpondence of the whole Heart.

What other Advice is neceſſary, you will find in the little Book I ſend you.

Be of good Courage; never give over your Enterprize whatever happens, and whatever it coſts, and then you are ſafe. Rely more upon God, than upon all the Works he requires of you. May he be your Strength, your Conſolation, and your Prayer!

CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION FROM A MOTHER TO A DAUGHTER.

SECT. I.

Inconveniences to be avoided in Devotion. Solid Devotion, to which we are all called, and how to anſwer this Call, eſpecially in what concerns the inward Life, the Habitation of God in us, and walking in his Preſence.

AS you now begin, my dear Daughter, to enter into an Age in which you may, and ought to be inſtructed in the indiſpenſable Duties to which the Character and Quality of a Chriſtian obliges you; I thought it my Duty not to delay giving you a little *In-*

ſtruction, by the Practice of which, I might engage you in a Life not more Chriſtian, than ſweet and pleaſant.

I don't require you, my dear Child, to undertake thoſe ſorts of Devotion which, beſides their being troubleſome to all the World, are of very little uſe to thoſe that practiſe them; becauſe they are equally ignorant both of the Principles, and of the Duties of a Chriſtian Life. In the times of Paganiſm every one made himſelf a God after his own Fancy; and now every one frames to himſelf a Devotion after his own faſhion. Some make it conſiſt in the Recital of a Number of vocal Prayers, and believe that, provided they omit no part of the Task they have ſet themſelves, they may let their Hearts and Affections be poſſeſſed by Creatures; thinking they have given God enough, when they have given him this Tribute of their Lips. Others place their Piety in being always abſent from their Families, to give themſelves, as they ſay, to Works of Charity; or perhaps they paſs a great part of the Day at Church, neglecting the care of a Family, which God has entruſted them with, to employ themſelves in things which, tho' good in themſelves, yet are no farther good for them,

than as they are conſiſtent with thoſe principal Duties which they are bound to diſcharge in the State wherein God has placed them.

When we carry Devotion to Extremity, it can never laſt; and yet when we neglect it we enter into the Coldneſs of Death.

I hope you will avoid both theſe Inconveniences, if you will believe, and faithfully follow what our Lord inſpires me to tell you concerning them: I hope alſo from his Goodneſs, that this Fidelity of yours will draw down many Bleſſings upon you, eſpecially that of perſevering in his Love, and of never loſing his Grace.

You are then, my Daughter, a Chriſtian, that is, *a Child of God* *, and conſequently an Heir of God himſelf, *a Co-heir with Jeſus Chriſt*, call'd to enjoy God, to be his Temple, for which reaſon it is that you were conſecrated to him in Baptiſm. Does not St. *Paul* ſay to Chriſtians, that they are *the Temple of God* †? If you are the Temple of God, God will dwell in you; and he will dwell there, as the ſame Apoſtle ſays, *by Faith* ‡. This then, my Child, is what you are called to.

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* *Rom.* viii. 17. † 2 *Cor.* vi. 16. ‡ *Eph.* iii. 17.

But

But it would be but a ſmall Matter to ſhew you what your Vocation is, if I did not at the ſame time teach you the way and means fully to anſwer it.

As you are compos'd of two Parts, an inward and an outward, they muſt both be taken care of and regulated, beginning with your nobleſt part firſt.

I have told you, my Daughter, that you are *the Temple of God*, if ſo be *God dwell in you*. How will he dwell in you? By Faith. And what is that which can procure you this Advantage? Hear the Oracle of Truth; *If any one*, ſaith *Jeſus Chriſt*, *doth my Will, my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him* *. Therefore to have *God dwell in you*, you muſt *do his Will*.

Methinks I hear you ſaying, my dear Child; How ſhall I do *the Will of God* if I don't know it? You may eaſily know it, if you are but deſirous enough to know it. God teaches you no other thing but his Will: His Will is to reign in us; but how ſhou'd he reign in us, if he does not dwell in us?

* *John* xiv. 23.

Take

Take great care, that you do not become like a profaned Temple, which from being an Habitation of God, is become the Retreat of Owls. Never force God by any Sin to retire from you: and if ever you ſhou'd chance to be ſo unhappy, delay not one Moment to return to him, and to invite him in the Bitterneſs of your Soul to return to his Habitation again. But if you let him be abſent long, how ought you to fear leſt he never return again! Not from any Diſ-inclination in him; for he is always deſirous to return into the Heart of Man: but Man is weaken'd and harden'd by his Separation from his God; and the longer he remains in this Separation, the more harden'd he becomes. Let not a vain Fear (which for want of Light is called Humility) hinder you from returning as ſoon as ever you have fallen. This is of the laſt Conſequence, and without it, 'tis impoſſible to lead a Chriſtian Life.

But as it is much better not to fall, than to riſe again, tho' never ſo ſoon afterwards, you muſt have a Preſervative againſt falling.

Walk, ſaith God, *in my Preſence, and be perfect* *. It is written, *Have God*

* *Gen.* xvii. 1.

always

always preſent, and you will not ſin *. You ſee then plainly, that to do the Will of God is to *walk in his Preſence*. This is what is abſolutely neceſſary for us.

We may eaſily *walk in the Preſence of God*, when we can pray to him inwardly. Whence comes it then that ſo few Chriſtians walk in the Preſence of God? It is becauſe they do not know that God dwells in them. But as for you, who cannot be ignorant of it, there needs no more but to ſhew you the way of making a right uſe of this divine Preſence.

SECT. II.

Two ways to keep our ſelves in the Preſence of God: The one, Prayer. An Exerciſe of Prayer for every Day in the Week. The other, to know and practiſe the Will of God.

TO do this, there are two ways. The firſt is Prayer; the other is the

* *Pſal.* xvi. 8.

Practice

Practice of the Will of God, in the Order of your daily Affairs. As to Prayer, you ſee plainly that you muſt apply your ſelf within your ſelf to him that inhabits there, and that it would be to give your ſelf a great deal of Trouble to little purpoſe, to ſeek for him afar off whom you have ſo near. For which you may take St. *Auſtin*'s word ſooner than mine. Thus this great Saint complains for having ſought after God out of himſelf. "I ſought thee, ſays he *, my "God, in Heaven, in Earth, and in the "Creatures, and there I found thee not. I "ſought thee afar off, and thou waſt very "near: I no ſooner ſought thee in my "Heart, but there I found thee. This then is the Place where you muſt ſeek God, and this is the Place where you will find him.

Having learned the Place where you ought to ſeek God, and to addreſs your Prayers to him, you muſt be taught *how to pray.*

There are two ſorts of Prayer, *Vocal Prayer*, and the *Prayer of the Heart*: But ſince vocal Prayer owes all its Worth to that

* *Confeſ.* lib. 10. c. 6. & 27.

of

of the Heart, I ſhall content my ſelf with teaching you this.

I have told you, that you muſt addreſs your Prayers to God dwelling in your Heart, and poſſeſs your ſelf with a Spirit of Faith, which will make you firmly believe that God is there, that he is attentive to you, and will hear you from his holy Temple. This firm Faith will naturally lead you both to Reſpect, and to Truſt: The Greatneſs of his Majeſty will create Reverence; and the Exceſs of his Goodneſs, which makes him ſtoop ſo low as even to you, and to be your Father, will engage you to a Love, and Reſignation of your ſelf to him ſo much the greater, as you have leſs reaſon to be regarded by him.

Pray then with Faith, Truſt, and Love; but pray with your Heart: Let your Prayer flow from Love, rather than from your Lips: Ask what you want with full Aſſurance: Frequently think upon what *Jeſus Chriſt* has ſuffered for you; but above all, beg of him to be your Maſter, and to teach you to pray himſelf. Say to him often, Lord, I am but a Child, I know not how to ſpeak; be perſuaded of what St. *Paul* ſays, that *we know not what we ought to ask, nor how to*

ask

*ask it as we ought; but that the Holy Spirit will ask it for us with Groanings which cannot be uttered**. Pray therefore this Holy Spirit to ask for you that which he wou'd have you to be, and do. For ſome time I would have you make uſe of the following Exerciſe.

SUNDAY: Look upon God as your MASTER, and keep cloſe by him like a little Scholar who deſires nothing but to be taught, ſaying to him with your whole Heart, and entirely recollected within your ſelf; *Teach me*, O my divine Maſter, *to do thy Will* †, and to pleaſe thee: And after remaining in Silence as it were to hearken to him, ſay with *Samuel, Speak, Lord, thy Servant heareth* ‡; and with *David, Teach me the way of thy Statutes; I will hear what the Lord my God will ſay to me within me* **. Think that he ſays to you with the Royal Prophet, *Hear, my Daughter, forget thy Father's Houſe, and the King ſhall greatly deſire thy Beauty* ††. But all this muſt be done in great Silence and Recollection.

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* *Rom.* viii. 26. † *Pſal.* cxliii. 10. ‡ 1 *Sam.* iii. 10.
** *Pſal.* cxix. 12, 33, 35. *and* lxxxv 8. 10, 11. †† *Pſal.* xlv.

MUNDAY:

MONDAY: Look upon God as a KING; and beg of him that his *Kingdom may come*, and that he would reign in you. Give him your Heart entirely, that he may poſſeſs it wholly; and, as a King ought to be abſolute in his Kingdom, that he may in like manner command abſolutely in your Soul, and make himſelf obeyed. Say, O my God, *make flexible this* rebellious *Heart* *; that it may be obedient to thee. He ſays to thee, my Daughter, *Behold thy King, who cometh to thee full of Meekneſs* †: Bid your Heart *open itſelf, that the King of Glory may enter in* ‡. After which, reſign up your ſelf wholly to this divine King: Remain in his Preſence with Reſpect, ready to receive the Orders which he ſhall pleaſe to give you.

TUESDAY: Look upon him as a FATHER; and be full of humble Acknowledgment, for his being graciouſly pleaſed to look upon you as his Daughter. For if this Relation of Father engages God to heap his Bleſſings upon you, and to make you Heir of his Kingdom, it obliges you at the ſame time to love him ſupremely, and to endeavour to pleaſe him in all things; and this

* *Pſal.* cxix. 36. † *Matt.* xxi. 5. ‡ *Pſal.* xxiv. 7.

ſhou'd

ſhou'd move you to ſpeak to him often with Confidence. A *Child* is not a Stranger to his *Father*, who loves the little Evidences it gives him of its Love, excuſes his Weakneſſes, and eaſily forgives him. *O beſt of Fathers, hold me as a little Child!* ſhou'd you ſay to him: and afterwards remain recollected in Repoſe in the Arms of your Father, without any other care than to look upon him and careſs him.

Say to him frequently, *My Father, my Father.* The Teſtimony we have within our ſelves of the divine Filiation, makes us cry, as St. *Paul* ſays*, *Abba, Father!* The word *crying* expreſſes perfectly well the Action of a Child towards its Father whom it loves. Love makes it *cry, My Father, my Father*, rather than *ſpeak* it. It cries both for Love, and for Grief. And as a little Child that only cries, and ſays, *Father*, makes itſelf underſtood in a thouſand other things which it does not ſay, by a paternal Heart: Juſt ſo it is with us; in crying only this word, God underſtands and hears us. The word *crying* teaches us, that God is not ſatisfied with a weak and languid word pronounced out of Cuſtom by

† *Gal.* iv. 6.

the Mouth, but not sent from the Heart: There ought to be a Cry of the whole Heart for a proper Acknowledgment of the Beneficence of such a Father. This *Spirit* of Love and Acknowledgment is the very same which *beareth witness to our Spirit that we are the Children of God* *. My Daughter, love, love passionately so good a Father, and never forfeit the Quality of a Child: Be, as St. *Paul* says, *a Child without Malice* †.

WEDNESDAY: Present your self before *Jesus Christ* as a sick Person cover'd all over with the Wounds of Sin. Look upon him as a PHYSICIAN full of Charity and Love, who came to heal you of your Wounds. To heal you, did I say? He is not content to assuage your Griefs; he bears them himself; he covers himself with your Wounds to heal you of them; he takes the bitter Medicine himself, and leaves you nothing but what's useful and agreeable. Be not afraid therefore to approach him, how full of Sores soever you may be, and to say to him with the Leper, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean* ‡; then remain in Silence expos'd to his divine Eyes. A sick

* *Rom.* viii. 16. † 1 *Cor.* xiv. 20. ‡ *Matt.* viii. 2.

Man, who, without much speaking, is content to lay open his Wounds, moves more Compassion than he who exaggerates his Miseries with an affected Eloquence. Heal me, Lord, that my Wounds may not become inveterate: *Speak but a word only, and thy Servant shall be healed* *.

THURSDAY: Be as little Sheep near your SHEPHERD, and ask of him with Confidence the Nourishment of your Soul. Our Lord was pleased to take upon him the Quality of a Shepherd with relation to us. He tells us himself, that *his Sheep hear his Voice* †; How can we be assured that *Jesus Christ* is our true Shepherd, but only by this, that we know his Voice? And how shall we know it if we do not hearken to it? *My Sheep*, says he, *know me, and I know them, and they follow me.* The Royal Prophet, who, tho' Shepherd of *Israel*, was yet himself a beloved Sheep, does not he say, *Thy Crook and thy Staff have comforted me* ‡? The little Sheep then that would be faithful must not stray from its Shepherd, but suffer itself to be conducted by his Hook, and to be led where he pleases. And whither wilt thou lead thy Sheep, O my divine

* *Matt.* viii. 8. † *John* x. 27. ‡ *Psal* xxiii. 4.

Shepherd? I will lead them, ſays he, *into excellent Paſtures* *; what more excellent Paſture than to nouriſh it with thy ſelf? Theſe are fat and fertile Paſtures, which make thoſe who are fed in them fruitful in all ſorts of good Works. The Royal Prophet ſays, that *this Rod and this Staff have comforted him.* How is this to be underſtood; for the Crook is for correcting the Sheep? O, the thing is this, the Sheep ſtrays ſometimes from its Shepherd to go to feed elſewhere: then he brings it back by the Hook of ſome Affliction into the Paſture which he himſelf has prepar'd for it. "O Lord, thou art my Shepherd, what can "I fear! If I wander, thou beareſt me up- "on thy Shoulders: If I am weak, thou "refreſheſt me." Abide near him then, my dear Child, and never leave him.

FRIDAY: Look upon him as your SAVIOUR and REDEEMER, who redeems you from the Slavery to which you had voluntarily ſubjected your ſelf; and ſay with the Royal Prophet, *Bleſs the Lord thy God, O my Soul! 'tis he that forgiveth all thy Sins, and healeth all thy Diſeaſes, and redeemeth thy Life from Death* †. But what was the Price he

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* *Ezek.* xxxiv. 14. † *Pſal.* cii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

paid

paid for this Ranſom? All his Blood, and his Life; in word, he gave himſelf wholly. He became himſelf a Slave to make you free; and all that he requires of you, is only this, that you would be willing to be brought out of your Captivity, and be ſet at liberty by him, ſince you can be ſet at liberty by no one elſe. Wou'd you not then be a great Enemy to your ſelf, ſhou'd you not ſuffer him to do it? He ſays himſelf, *If the Son ſhall make you free, ye ſhall be truly free* *. You belong to him by Right of Purchaſe; you are his Poſſeſſion and Heritage: He ſays it himſelf, that *Iſrael is the Inheritance of the Lord* †.

As it was his Blood which was the Price of our Redemption, pray him to waſh you in it: place your ſelf very near him, that the Blood which flows in ſuch abundance from his Wounds may ſerve you for a Bath. Say to him, *Lord, I am oppreſſed, anſwer for me* ‡. After this, melt into Love and Acknowledgment, then remain in Silence before him, who ſpeaks for you to his Father with as many Mouths as there are Wounds in his Body.

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* *John* viii. 36. † *Jer.* x. 16. ‡ *Iſai.* xxxviii. 14.

Saturday: Present your self before *Jesus Christ* as a Spouse before her Husband. But is not this Presumption? No. He has espoused human Nature, and in that has espoused you. He would also unite you to himself in the closest Union, which he ask'd of his Father, when he said, *Father, let them be one, as we are one* *. Doubt not in the least, my dear Child, but that you are called to this supreme Happiness. Our Lord himself invites you, *My Sister, my Spouse*, says he, *open your Heart entirely to me* †; 'tis but this I want and wait for, to give my self entirely to thee. *My Head is all cover'd with the Drops of the Night* of my Passion: *Come from* Lebanon, *my Spouse, that I may crown thee* ‡, and that thou mayst know by Experience that *my Delights are to be with the Children of Men* **; that I am the Lover of your Soul; that I have left the Bosom of my Father to espouse you. I have embraced Sorrow and Affliction to make a Conquest of your Heart. I demand nothing but this Heart in exchange for mine. *My Daughter, give me thy Heart* ††.

"O sacred Spouse, who would not love thee!
"Consume me with thy Flame. Make me

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* *John* xvii. 21, 22. † *Cant.* v. 2. ‡ *Cant.* iv. 8.
** *Prov.* viii. 31. †† *Prov.* xxiii. 26.

"wholly

wholly thine. Never suffer me to do any thing unworthy of the Honour which thou doſt me." After this, repoſe your ſelf in the Arms of your divine Spouſe.

Do not, my Daughter, like thoſe *adulterous* Spouſes who withdraw their Heart from their lawful Husband to proſtitute themſelves to infamous Creatures. This Spouſe aſſures us, that he will *deſtroy thoſe adulterous Souls who ſeparate themſelves from him* *. Say then with the Royal Prophet, *It is good for me to hold me faſt by God, and to put my whole Truſt in him.*

This, my dear Daughter, is the *little* inward *Exerciſe* which I would deſire you to uſe *every Day*, in the order I have ſet it down: and when you have a Taſte of God, and Prayer is become eaſy to you, make uſe of the Books which I have recommended to you.

You muſt endeavour all the Day long to continue your Prayer by fervent Aſpirations, and by returning conſtantly within your ſelf, conformably to your Diſpoſition in the Morning, ſometimes by throwing your ſelf into the Arms of your Father, othertimes into the Arms of your Spouſe, following

* *Pſal.* lxxiii. 27, 28.

the Diſpoſitions preſcribed above. By this Prayer, you will come to know *the Will of God*, which I obſerved to you was the ſecond Part of the inward Chriſtian.

The Will of God is known two ways; by Inſpiration, and by daily Providences.

Men make no uſe of either of theſe; and that is the reaſon why they neither know, nor do the Will of God.

Inſpiration is loſt, being not ſo much as known to the greateſt part of Chriſtians, becauſe they do not hearken to God ſpeaking in them, far from imitating holy *David*, who *hearkned to what the Lord ſaid to him within him* *.

The whole depends upon this Attention; upon which Account it is ſaid, *To Day if ye will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts* †. Why is it ſaid, *to Day?* To ſhew us that we muſt be in continual Attention. And why muſt we be ſo attentive? Becauſe the Voice of Inſpiration is delicate. It is a Voice which inclines the Heart; not a Voice which makes itſelf underſtood by Ideas and diſtinct Words. It is ſaid, that *David inclined the Heart of all* Iſrael, *as of one Man* ‡. This divine Voice is a power-

* *Pſal.* lxxxv. 8. † *Heb.* iii. 7, 8. ‡ 2 *Sam.* xix. 14.

ful Operation, which ſweetly and gently inclines the Heart. God *ſpeaks to the Heart of Jeruſalem* *: And to be flexible to Inſpiration, the Heart muſt not be faſten'd to the Earth. It muſt alſo be very attentive to it by reaſon of the great Delicateneſs of the Voice of Inſpiration. *Elijah* ſays, God *was not in the ſtrong Wind, nor in the Earthquake, nor in the great Noiſe* †; but he was *in the Zephyr* a ſoft and gentle Wind.

Whence is it then, may you anſwer, that it is ſaid in other Places; that *the Voice of the Lord thunder'd*, that *the Voice of the Lord breaketh the Cedar Trees* ‡, if it be ſo delicate as you repreſent it? To this I anſwer, my Child, that the Voice of the Anger and Indignation of the Lord is of this ſort; but that the Voice of Inſpiration is of another Nature. 'Tis true, when the Holy Spirit deſcended upon the Apoſtles, it was with a great Noiſe **; but the Buſineſs at that time, was not a particular Inſpiration, it was to eſtabliſh a Church, and to convince Mankind by Prodigies.

* *Iſai.* xl. 2. † 1 *Kings* xix. 11. ‡ *Pſal.* xxix. 3, 5.
** *Acts* ii. 2.

It is necessary then to be attentive with-in, to know the inward Will of God, in order to follow it when known.

As for the outward Will of God, *particular and daily Providence* discovers it to us every Moment; and our Business is faithfully to follow it from Moment to Moment, chearfully accepting all that befalls us (sweet or bitter, crucifying or gratifying) whether from the Hand of God by Afflictions, or from Men by ill Usage and Persecutions, or from our own selves by our Imprudences and Mistakes: and in doing thus we cannot be deceived: for it is most certain that whatever happens to us (excepting Sin) is the Will of God.

For the Practice of this Will of God, let this be your Rule; after having followed the Method laid down for your inward Exercise, you must prefer the doing of that which properly belongs to your State and Condition of Life, before any thing else. This is your chief and principal Devotion. Now to secure you from falling into an idle and useless way of Life, I thought it proper, my dear Daughter, to give you the Regulation of a Christian Day: which I shall do, begging of you to be as exact as possible in observing all the Directions.

SECT.

SECT. III.

The Regulation of a Christian Day.

RISE every Day, and go to Bed at a set Hour. Where there is no Rule, we live in perpetual Disorder. You shou'd not go to Bed later than Ten, nor rise later than Seven. When you are older, you wou'd do well to rise earlier.

As soon as you are awake, give the first of your Thoughts to God, and offer up to him the First-fruits of the Day.

Never fail to fall down upon your Knees as soon as you are up, you owe this Mark of Adoration to the supreme Majesty of God.

Endeavour to pass half an Hour in Prayer after you are up in the Morning. Unite your self to the Sacrifice which *Jesus Christ* made of himself, and sacrifice your self to him, that he may do in you and with you whatever he pleases. Let your principal Exercise be a continual Submission to all that God wills: Endeavour to conform your

your ſelf to this divine Will in all things: let it be your Sovereign; be you its Servant; knowing this, that to ſerve God, is to reign.

Dreſs your ſelf as quick as you can: loſe no time; Time is given us to be employ'd, not to be thrown away. Fly loitering. Avoid Magnificence and Affectation in your Dreſs; avoid Negligence alſo. Be decent and clean that you may not diſguſt thoſe you converſe with. Avoid Expenſiveneſs. Let your Cloaths be decently ſuitable to your Rank; let your Virtue, your Civility, and your good Behaviour diſtinguiſh you, and not your Dreſs. They that are fond of being diſtinguiſh'd by their Habits and Equipages, muſt certainly be unprovided of real Merit.

Never paſs the Morning without reading ſome ſpiritual Book, as *the Imitation of Jeſus Chriſt*, by *Thomas à Kempis*, the Works of St. *Francis de Sales*, and ſuch like excellent Books. Read but little at a time, but read with Reliſh and Application. Read ſlowly, that you may nouriſh your ſelf with what you read, and loſe not by Diſſipation of Mind out of Prayer, what you receiv'd of God in Prayer, but keep it with all the care with which you would preſerve a pre-

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cious Liquor from evaporating. The Fire is kindled in Prayer, but it ſoon goes out if it be not continually ſupply'd all Day long. And the Fewel you are to feed it with is this, *viz.* ſimple and frequent Acts of Recollection within your ſelf, calm Acts of Love, of Gratitude and Acknowledgment, of offering up your ſelf, of gentle Tendence to and Union with your Center, which is God.

But above all Books, I recommend the *Holy Scripture* to you. For by reading of *This*, you will be particularly inſtructed in the Duties and Obligations of Chriſtianity. Read it frequently: make it your principal Study: let it be your daily Bread. There you will learn of *Jeſus Chriſt* himſelf what you ſhou'd do to avoid diſpleaſing him. There you will ſee what *Jeſus Chriſt* has done and ſuffer'd for you. There your Religion is in its Purity. There you will be ſupported by the Example of the Patriarchs and Saints of the Old Law, as well as of the chief Pillars of the Church. To the reading of this then, my Dear Daughter, I adviſe you above all other Books. Here you will find the Subſtance and Savour of all ſpiritual Writings. I wou'd never have you paſs a Day without reading ſomething

of it. Read sometimes where the Book happens to open, but generally read it in order, that you may better perceive all its Beauties, and taste all its Sweetness. Read with Humility, not for Ostentation, but to nourish and edify your Soul, to know your Duty to God, and what the Covenant he has made with you engages you to.

Your Afternoon you will employ in working, and making Visits. You may take some time for Recreation; but never pass an Afternoon without taking some time for Recollection and Prayer.

In the Evening make an *Examination* of your self, and an Act of Contrition. Lie down in the Arms of my Divine Master, in the sacred Sleep, [or reposing of the Soul in God] and do not quit the one, but to enter into the other. This will procure you a gentle, quiet Sleep. Awake in the same Arms, and betake your self again to this mysterious Sleep. Rise in the same Disposition.

Avoid during the Day as much as ever you can the Employment and Occupation of the Head, to preserve only that of the Heart. When any Thoughts or Reflections come into your Mind, take great care how you present 'em to your Reason: On the

contrary, let 'em drop, that you may open your Heart to God. Continue your Day as you began it, so as that in the very midst of your Occupations you may from time to time repose your self in God.

SECT. IV.

How we ought to mortify our selves several ways, and in several things.

MOrtify your self every Day in some thing that wou'd be a Satisfaction to you, in Imitation of St. *Paul*, who *bore in his Body the Mortification of Jesus Christ* *. Man naturally loves Pleasure; he must therefore avoid Pleasure till he has arrived at so perfect a Degree of Conversion, that he loves Pain as much as he lov'd Pleasure. It is of great Consequence, as the Apostle says, to make *the Members* that have served Iniquity, *become the Servants of Righteousness* †.

* Col. iii. 5. † Rom. vi. 19.

Let

Let the *Eyes*, which have been the Source of infinite Sins, be punished. There are two ways of punishing them. The one by Tears; which yet is not to be enjoyn'd to all the World. For the Tears which are not produced by the fervent Heat of Love, but flow only from a Tenderness for our selves, are not those which God requires: He himself must kindle the Fire in the Heart, before the sacred Heat evaporates through the Eyes. But as Tears are not necessary to Penitence, (altho' where they are, they are a Proof of it) and as they are not in our Power, so they cannot be enjoin'd. The other way of mortifying ones Sight, is by Recollection in Prayer, shutting our Eyes to all outward Objects, that the whole Force of the Soul may be kept for God. It is necessary also to mortify them in all Curiosity, depriving them of the Satisfaction of seeing a great many, and great Variety of things. This sort of Mortification is of great use, and yet no way prejudicial to Health.

The *Tongue* ought to be mortify'd by restraining it from saying things which at once flatter our own Vanity, and gratify our Antipathy and Spleen against others. The *Taste* must be mortified in refusing it that which is most agreeable, and giving it that which

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is moſt diſagreeable to it, This may be done without letting any thing appear, and without any Injury to the Health. The *Ears* ſhou'd be mortified by avoiding the hearing of all flattering and poiſon'd Diſcourſes, and by delighting in hearing the Word of the Lord, not only the outward Word, which ſtrikes our bodily Ears, but that which God ſpeaks within us.

The Softneſs and Effeminacy of the Body ought to be mortified and overcome, by not ſuffering it to ſleep ſo much, and by ſtealing ſome Moments from our Sleep to conſecrate them to God. We ought moreover to lay aſide a thouſand little Niceties. The true way of chaſtening the Body, and which may and ought to be practiſed at all Times and in all Places, is to ſuffer, for the Love of God, all the Inconveniences of Life which happen to us in the Order of Providence, Heat, Cold, a hard Bed, lying awake, a ſickly Conſtitution, the Inconſiderateneſs of thoſe we live with, the Unhandineſs of Servants, the Ill-will of Men, their pointed Railleries, their Calumnies; and laſtly our own Defects, and the pains we are at to conquer our irregular Habits.

The *Humiliation* which is moſt advantagious, and hardeſt to bear, is, that which

is occasion'd by our own Faults, Miseries, and Sins. We ought to bear with our selves, and to consider our selves, as if, for the Love of God, we had the Care of some Leper: We must every Day cleanse his Wounds, without being tired and surprized at the Stench of his Ulcers.

Thus, my dear Daughter, it is necessary for you to join a true and solid Mortification to your Prayer. Let us not flatter our selves, Prayer and Mortification are two Sisters so inseparably attendant upon one another, that the one is no sooner lost, but it costs the Life of the other. Dryness in Prayer is very often caus'd by nothing but Unmortifiedness. God is a jealous God; he punishes our Delicacies and Infidelities by his Absence. Observe therefore the Rule I have laid down, and every Day offer this double Sacrifice to God, of depriving your self of what is most agreeable to you, and doing what is most repugnant to your Senses: And in this don't flatter your self: Be sincere with God; and whatever you do, do it so purely for God, as to conceal it, as much as possible, from the Eyes of all Creatures, having nothing but God in view in all that you do. God regards the Intention as much, or more than the Action.

Give

Give your self to God with a right, sincere, and disengaged Heart: mortify and deny your self continually. When you feel your Inclinations carried towards any Creature, and your Mind and Heart busied about it, you must bear with your self, returning to God with an humble Confidence, letting the Thoughts of it drop, and suffering the Uneasiness it causes you, without opposing it directly, which wou'd but encrease your Trouble; but remain quietly in the Presence of God without multiplying your self by Acts. All that you have to do, is to avoid as much as possible the Occasions, and to die to all the little Satisfactions and Desires of seeing, of speaking, and hearing.

You must not disquiet your self for the Troubles, Clouds, Temptations, and continual Vicissitudes to which human Nature is subject. But bear 'em mildly, letting 'em run off, accustoming your self to Calmness and Peace.

You must not make a Scruple of doing any thing your State of Life requires of you; but do every thing in the Order of God, and for God; and look upon every thing that happens to you as the Order of God, nourishing your self with his Will in the

preſent Moment; be content with every thing; without troubling your ſelf about what may appear more holy and better to others: The Order of God ought to be your Guide.

Die to the Deſire of ſpeaking of God and holy things, it is always imperfect; what God deſires of you is a Death to all things. 'Tis not in ſpeaking of God, that we ſhould expreſs what we feel of God; on the contrary, it is hurtful to us. If I have any Credit with you, you muſt be a long while ſilent of God, that you may only ſpeak to God. God would have what he works in us be a Secret; and if we are to manifeſt his Operation, it muſt be by ſuch an outward Behaviour, as is all Sweetneſs, and Meekneſs, all Humility, all Submiſſion, all Sincerity and Chearfulneſs.

Preſerve always an inward Solitude, without which the outward ſignifies nothing. Forget your ſelf, and rid your Mind of the Thoughts of all Creatures, to employ it only upon God: But don't make your ſelf uneaſy at what paſſes within you without your Conſent. No impetuous Deſires are from God. God dwells in the Calm.

SECT. V.

Some Rules for Converſation.

AS Converſation is that in which the Society of Life does chiefly conſiſt, you ought eſpecially to learn how to behave your ſelf in it.

Converſation ought to be eaſy, obliging, and free from Diſpute. When any ariſes, yield eaſily, never make any one uneaſy; bear with the Defects of others.

Never ſpeak of any one but to their Advantage, taking the part, as far as you can, of the defam'd abſent. Never judge any body, and don't eaſily believe the ill that is ſaid of others. Never lie, nor exaggerate any thing.

Let your Converſation be free and chearful, but ſhun all Vanity.

Avoid Flatterers, and thoſe who applaud your Defects. Look upon thoſe as true Friends who tell you of a Fault. Be aſſur'd that the Commendation of any thing

that is ill in us, is nothing but Raillery and Satyr.

Never contract a Friendſhip with Perſons who allow themſelves too great Liberties: don't converſe with 'em. Make your Friendſhips among Perſons of Piety, and Prudence, of Virtue and Solidity. Give your Friends all liberty to reprehend you; and when they do ſo, take it kindly of 'em; without which, you will never be perfect, tho' you labour after it all your Life long. Never look upon thoſe who flatter you as your true Friends: they are ſelf-intereſted, not ſincere Friends.

Never break with your Friends, unleſs they are vicious; and endeavour to chuſe ſuch as are not likely to give you the occaſion. Be very diſtruſtful of Women that are not virtuous; they are often more dangerous than Men.

Never ſuffer any Man to have any manner of Freedom with you: You muſt be upon the Reſerve with them. Never receive any one with Aſſiduity. Never give occaſion for ſuſpecting that you make a Preference in your Heart, which Decency conſtrains you to conceal; but with Civility to all, be familiar with none. It is not enough, not to aim at making Lovers; you

muſt ſhun more than Death whatever may caſt the leaſt Blemiſh upon your Reputation. Never be with a Man alone, and never give him an Opportunity of ſaying that to you which you ought not to hear. Take care that you give not any Man an Entrance into your Heart: 'tis like breaking a Dam, after which there is no ſtopping the Inundation.

Give *Alms* according to your Fortune. Viſit the ſick. Take care of a Proviſion for the Poor where your Eſtate lies; thoſe you are obliged to aſſiſt. Comfort the afflicted, and never afflict any one. Let all your Works be done with Diſcretion and Charity.

Be mild, chearful, peaceable: Have no whimſical and fantaſtical Humours: Never reprove without reaſon, and then your Correction will be uſeful: but never do it in a Paſſion. Much Steadineſs and Charity, but little Familiarity with your Domeſticks. When they are ſick, ſuffer 'em not to be put out of Doors: You ought to ſhew them the greateſt Charity. If their Diſtempers are ſuch as that they cannot be kept in the Houſe without danger, ſoften their going out by the kindeſt Aſſiſtances in other reſpects, that they may be convinced their

being put out was not out of Unkindness, but Necessity.

Never injure any body, not even in jest; it is very indecent: and never say any thing which you think will give another any Uneasiness. Pardon Injuries readily; but never give occasion to others to do the same by you. Never play upon any one whatsoever, 'tis a great Sin.

To conclude, dear Daughter, be instant in begging of God his Help and Assistance: and I doubt not but if you live according to these Directions, you will be happy both in this World, and in the next.

The following Letter giving Light to ſome Points in the foregoing Inſtruction, was thought proper to be added to it.

THE ſovereign Happineſs of Life is the Dependence upon the Will of God. How God manifeſts his Will outwardly and inwardly, and the Fidelity we owe to it. Prayer of the Heart preferable to that of the Head. We ought to hearken to God, who ſpeaks to the Heart, and how. Solid Devotion, in what it conſiſts. Poſitive Reſolutions. Motives not to give way to Difficulties. Not to forget God, but to ſeek him conſtantly within us.

1. The ſupreme Happineſs of Life, as you well obſerve, is the continual Dependence upon the Will of God, in every thing. This is the Subſtance, and whatever is not this, is but the Shadow of Piety. For, I pray, of what uſe is that Servant who burdens himſelf with Buſineſs that is not requir'd of him, and neglects what his Maſter has poſitively commanded him? I know

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it may be ſaid, that no one wou'd expreſſly contradict the Will of God by a manifeſt Diſobedience, that has but the leaſt Knowledge of God, and deſign to pleaſe him: But this is not enough: the holy Scripture ſays, that *it is as the Sin of Witchcraft, to reſiſt; and as the Sin of Idolatry not to be willing to obey* *. All the Difficulty then for Men of good Will, is to know the Will of God.

2. The Will of God is manifeſted outwardly or inwardly: Outwardly, by the State, Employ, or Vocation of every one: We ought always to prefer the proper Duty of our State to all particular Devotions whatſoever. The Will of God is alſo known by the Law, by the Goſpel, and by the good Orders and Diſcipline of the Church, which we are bound by God to obey. This is a general Rule for all. But there is alſo a divine Order expreſſly for every one of us in particular: and that is, whatever happens to us from Moment to Moment, whether from God, who tries us; or from the Creatures, who crucify us; or from our ſelves, by our Imprudences; In fine, every thing that happens to us, except Sin, ſhews us the outward Will of God.

3. His inward Will is manifeſted either by the ſimple Inclination God gives to the

* 1 *Sam.* xv. 23.

Soul,

Soul, or by the Diſpoſitions into which he puts it. The Soul ought to be equally faithful to both of theſe. For as on the one hand we ought to reſiſt the irregular Deſires of *Nature*, ſo on the other, we ought to acquieſce in the Deſires form'd in us by *Grace*. We may know our Deſires are from Grace, when they are not ſelf-intereſted, when they have God only for their End, and when they are not contrary to the Duties of our State. For all Deſires which contradict any Duty of our Place, how good ſoever they may appear, are certainly not of God. For God cannot be contrary to himſelf; and 'tis in this Senſe, that we muſt mortify and die to the Deſires of good things, when they are inconſiſtent with what God requires of us otherways. As for our inward Diſpoſitions, how painful and troubleſome ſoever they are, we muſt bear them in the Spirit of Sacrifice: for he that does not deſerve any thing, has no reaſon to expect any thing. The wiſe Man adviſes us, to *bear the Delay of Conſolations, that our Life may be renewed and encreaſe* *.

4. To anſwer ſimply your Queſtion concerning what kind of Prayer it is, that I think God would have you to uſe; I muſt ſay, that your Prayer ought to be rather the

* *Eccluſ.* ii. 3.

Product of your Heart, than of your Head. God values *Love*, much more than *Reasoning*. Love much, and reason little. 'Tis a good way to speak a little to God, who dwells in the midst of our Souls on purpose to hearken to us; but after having spoken to God, we ought out of respect to hearken to him some Moments. If God did not speak to our Heart, he wou'd not have said in so many Places of Scripture, that *he speaks to the Heart of Jerusalem* *; that we must hear him; *hearken, O Daughter* †! Do you hearken to him then for some Moments. But perhaps you will say, I don't know the Voice of God. The reason is, because you do not understand his Language: for he speaks incessantly, but he speaks efficaciously. [His Words are Works.] The Voice of God is a [powerful and] intimate Touch [or Movement;] which teaches with little Noise the divine Science of *knowing* and *loving* God, and of knowing and hating our selves. Never end your Prayer before you have rested some Moments in Silence to hearken to God; begging of him that he himself wou'd teach you to pray. One cannot always when one wou'd pray with the Head, our Imagination is so volatile and roving. And as all our Endeavours and Efforts sometimes cannot fix it, I shou'd

* *Isaiah* xl. 2. † *Psal.* xlv. 10.

think

think the time we employ upon this, wou'd be better beſtow'd in making Acts of Love.

5. You are in the right to be afraid of *ridiculous* and *extraordinary* Devotions. But the Prayer of the Heart, and the Love of the Will of God cannot fall under either of theſe Cenſures. This [Prayer of the Heart and of Love] is as old as the World, and God never requir'd any thing of Man but his *Heart*. This is the Prayer of the old Law, and of the new. If Prayer depended only upon reaſoning, the Scripture wou'd not have ſaid, that *God hears the Preparation of the Heart of the Poor* *, that he loves Simplicity. The ſame may be ſaid of Submiſſion to the Will of God: This is the Hinge upon which the whole Practice of the Goſpel turns, firſt to ſubmit our ſelves to the divine Will, afterwards to conform our ſelves, and at laſt to unite our ſelves to it. If this be thought an *extraordinary* Devotion, it is becauſe every thing that is not an entire Depravation, is [at preſent] look'd upon as extraordinary: and for my part, I think it much more extraordinary that Men ſhou'd rather reaſon upon the Will of God, than ſubmit to it. When we are once inſtructed in the Truths of Chriſtianity, we need not reaſon any more before God [in Prayer;] but endeavour to love him, and

* *Pſal.* x. 17.

to

to ſubmit our ſelves to him. To love him out of Gratitude and Acknowledgment, is, as I obſerv'd, the firſt ſtep to a Love of Truſt and Confidence, which at laſt is changed into an abſolute and perfect Reſignation of our ſelves into the Hands of him we love.

6. I ſee nothing of *extraordinary* in all this; but I rather think, that no other way, is the way of the Spirit. This is ſo true, that the Soul is always uneaſy, and in a State of Slavery, till it has taken this way, which is the Path of *Peace* and *Liberty*, in which we find our Souls at eaſe. St. *Paul* ſays, that *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty* *. Man cannot ſubſiſt long in a violent State: it is neceſſary then to take up ſuch a Piety as gives him Peace and Tranquillity. I add alſo that nothing is more reaſonable than this: for what can be more juſt than to pray to, to ſpeak to, to hearken to God, and to wait for, and expect all our Aſſiſtance from him? Than to ſubmit our ſelves to his Appointments? To accept chearfully all that he does, or orders for us? If we don't do thus, are we not always reſtleſs and uneaſy, and often even rebellious and diſobedient? Nothing is more certain than that the Practice of Submiſſion to the Will of God gives Peace to the Soul. For he that wills nothing but

* 2 *Cor.* iii. 17.

what God orders, can never be deceived. This is the only way that can properly be called ſimple, it being uniform, and always one and the ſame Exerciſe.

7. As to poſitive Reſolutions [about particular things] they are never agreeable to thoſe who have ever ſo little Knowledge of themſelves: they know how little themſelves are to be depended upon: they therefore preſent themſelves before God, and give themſelves up to him, that he may do his holy Will in them and by them, that he may make them avoid ſuch and ſuch Faults, and practice ſuch and ſuch Virtues. If the Reſolutions we made about our Imperfections cou'd give us Strength, what you ſay wou'd be true: But all Strength is in God, and Miſery and Weakneſs in us: when we commit any faults, we muſt have recourſe to God, implore his help, be convinced of our Miſery, and that if God ſhou'd leave us to our ſelves, we ſhou'd be ſtill more miſerable, and we ſhou'd give our ſelves up to him that he may guard us, ſince we are not able to guard our ſelves.

8. Be of good Courage, the greater difficulties you find in the Path of Virtue, the more ſhou'd they animate you to purſue it. God well deſerves it, and tho' we did not find our Intereſt in ſerving him, yet that which he is in himſelf, and that which we owe to him, ought to make us do all things for him. Never

9. Never forget this God of infinite Goodneſs! Reproach your ſelf all the Moments you live without having your Thoughts and Heart employ'd upon him. How can you forget him, whom you have ſo near you? What? Is he in the midſt of your Heart, and are you at a loſs for means to bring him to your Remembrance? The Scripture ſays, *he is in the midſt of her, therefore ſhall ſhe not be moved* *. How come you then to be moved for Trifles and things of nothing, ſince he is in you? It is becauſe he is there alone, and you do not ſeek his Face continually, nor endeavour to come into his Preſence. You will never get an Habit of ſeeking God within you, unleſs you ſtrive to do it. Seek him then diligently and inceſſantly, that your Faith and Love may never fail.

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* *Pſal.* xlvi. 5.

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